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REVEALS

"THIS IS A ONCE-IN-A-
CAREER CHARACTER
— A DEPARTURE FROM
ANYTHING THAT I'VE
PLAYED BEFORE."

DWAYNE JOHNSON

EXCLUSIVE!

BLACK ADAM

DWAYNE JOHNSON'S ANTIHERO IS
READY TO RUMBLE WITH THE JSA

FUTURE

+ THE WOMAN KING MICHAEL MANN MY POLICEMAN JEFF BRIDGES
KAITLYN DEVER HARLEY QUINN DAVID BOWIE GANGS OF LONDON S2

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Welcome to

TOTAL FILM THE SMARTER MOVIE MAGAZINE



After years of lockdown and not being able to travel, I was personally invited to join Dwayne Johnson in LA for the trailer launch of *Black Adam* earlier this year – but an expired visa prevented me from going. Matt Maytum went instead and was treated to Johnson's trademark warmth and verve on a studio backlot. I was jealous. Why? Because we meet a lot of high-profile people in this job and a number of them



do not enjoy their contracted interactions with the press. And make it known by not engaging fully or in some cases, being downright rude. I'm not playing the tiniest violin in the world for film journos here – rather I'm singling out Johnson as someone who not only understands and respects the whole process of a film, but is fully present within it. He goes all in with heat-seeking interest and engagement, just as he does in his career.

Which is why we're stoked for *Black Adam* – DC's badass antihero and Johnson's passion project. Matt got the inside track on the JSA and Adam's beef for this stellar issue. And he got a bottle of tequila gifted from the big guy too. All the intensity and bantz plus a drink? I've made sure my US visa is now renewed and ready for the next superhero call...

Enjoy the issue!

JANE CROWTHER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
@TOTALFILM_JANE

CALL SHEET THIS ISSUE'S EXTRAS



DEPUTY EDITOR

MATT MAYTUM
@MATTMAYTUM

It was a huge pleasure to chat to the big man Dwayne Johnson again for *Black Adam* – and I'm ready to raise a glass of Teremana to launch this new issue.



EDITOR AT LARGE

JAMIE GRAHAM
@JAMIE_GRAHAM9

I've wanted to interview Michael Mann for 25 years and, like Hanna stalking McCauley, finally got my Mann. We talked *Heat 2* and his explosive 40-year career. Bucket list ticked.



SENIOR ONLINE EDITOR

JACK SHEPHERD
@JACKJSHEPHERD

My first San Diego Comic-Con was a barnstormer – stunned by a huge *LOTR* panel, blown away by Marvel's avalanche of announcements, and mesmerised by the surprisingly great *Dungeons & Dragons* trailer.



CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

NEIL SMITH

I watched 1959 comedy *The Battle Of The Sexes* to find the Edinburgh street shot Stephen Frears says he replicated by chance in his new film *The Lost King*. I eventually found it and could now really murder some shortbread.



REVIEWS EDITOR

MATTHEW LEYLAND
@TOTALFILM_MATTL

Andor's Denise Gough had a funny story about a crewperson repeatedly getting her character name, Dedra, wrong... "I was like, I don't want to tell him, because I love that he's turned this Imperial woman into 'Deirdre'."



CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

LEILA LATIF
@LEILA_LATIF

Viola Davis talked to me about how important it was for her to see Melba Moore and Cicely Tyson in *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines and hoped young Black women reading her interview would be inspired in the same way.

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NO MORE MR. NICE GUY

Dwayne Johnson gets his hands dirty as DC's powerful antihero, and gives us the gritty scoop on its creation.



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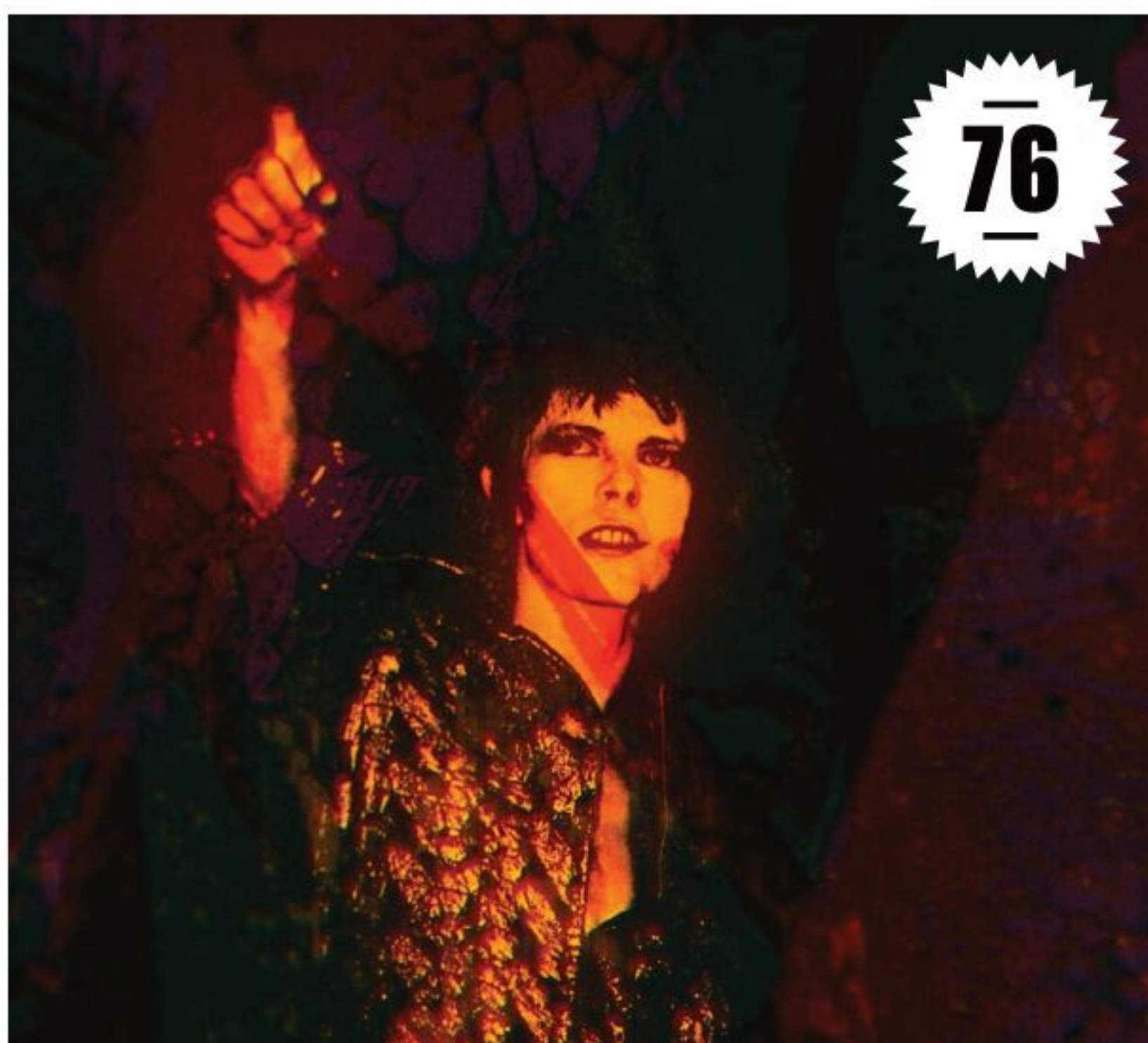
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JORDAN FARLEY
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TEASERS

BREAKING CONVENTION

SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON Teasers was in attendance at the world's biggest comic-con as they dropped the Hall H-bombs...

1 MARVEL STUDIOS

Following a seemingly rudderless Phase 4 so far, Marvel's return to the famous Hall H had to deliver something special, and Kevin Feige's slew of announcements was an exhilarating display of grandiose forward thinking. The entirety of Phase 5 was revealed within a frantic 10 minutes, including a Daredevil series and a Thunderbolts movie. Feige went one step further, divulging that *Fantastic Four* will kickstart Phase 6, and two Avengers movies – subtitled *The Kang Dynasty*

(directed by Shang-Chi's Destin Daniel Cretton) and *Secret Wars* – will bring the newly-minted Multiverse Saga to an end.

As per tradition, there was also exclusive footage shown only to those in attendance. *Teasers* can report that the trailer for *Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 3* was an extremely emotional affair. Chris Pratt's Peter Quill continues to search for Zoe Saldana's Gamora, now leader of the Ravagers. The final instalment in James Gunn's trilogy looks set to explore Rocket's past with

the raccoon's seeming creator, the High Evolutionary, played by *Peacemaker*'s Chukwudi Iwuji.

Teasers also witnessed footage from *Secret Invasion*. Samuel L. Jackson's Nick Fury returns from space to help Cobie Smulders' Maria Hill hunt the invading Skrull, multiple versions of which are played devilishly by Kingsley Ben-Adir. Olivia Colman's helping Fury, while Emilia Clarke's mysterious character is caught up in the conspiracy. Major *Captain America: Winter Soldier* vibes from the trailer. ➡

➤ **Ant-Man And The Wasp:** *Quantumania* also unveiled new footage teasing appearances from Jonathan Majors' showboating Kang, MODOK, and Bill Murray! But Feige and co. saved the best for last, as Ryan Coogler and the *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* cast took to the stage to deliver a moving tribute to Chadwick Boseman, and unveil the film's roof-raising first teaser. Featuring lavish new looks at a post-T'Challa Wakanda, an enticing glimpse of Tenoch Huerta's Namor, and the briefest tease of the person in the Black Panther suit (the smart money's on Shuri), Phase 4 looks set to end on a high.

2 DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: HONOUR AMONG THIEVES

Who could have predicted that *Dungeons & Dragons* would be the surprise stand-out of SDCC? One exclusive clip showcased Chris Pine's hilarious Bard waking up dead soldiers in the hope of discovering the location of a mysterious helmet. The Bard needs to go through a few undead to find the answer he's looking for, and each interaction is as hilarious as the last – no surprise considering *Game Night* directors John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein are behind the camera.

Another clip featured the lead adventurers – also including Michelle Rodriguez, Justice Smith, and Sophia Lillis – running through an epic maze in the middle of a colosseum. Hugh Grant's brilliantly funny character introduces the game to an enormous audience. On the panel itself, Grant was the highlight, at one stage being asked about his spirit animal by an audience member. "A tiger," he replied. "I've been called that in the bedroom." No word on whether the sex jokes made it into *D&D*.

3 THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RINGS OF POWER

Bear McCreary opened *LOTR:TROP*'s Hall H panel with bombast. The composer, backed by a full orchestra and choir, played through a selection of the show's score and then introduced host Stephen Colbert, a notorious *LOTR* nerd. A screen then expanded around the everyone, the walls transformed into one huge LED panel, transporting the audience to the isles of Númenor and the Elven kingdom of Lindon. It was breathtaking.

For his part, Colbert did an admirable job conducting interviews with the

20-plus cast and crew members. At one point, co-showrunner Patrick McKay recited a passage of Tolkien in Elvish, but perhaps the most empowering moment was Sophia Nomvete talking about playing the first-ever female Dwarf on screen, revealing that she auditioned two days before giving birth, and the seams in the shoulders of her character's outfit were put there so she could remove the costume easily to breastfeed.

4 JOHN WICK 4

Keanu Reeves arrived on stage during the *BRZRKR* panel to roaring applause – as expected. A sequel to his comic, subtitled *The Immortal Saga Continues*, is coming soon, and the actor was keen to discuss how the project came together. However, the big news happened towards the end: a *BRZRKR* movie's on the way from *Project Power* scribe Mattson Tomlin, plus an animated series, lasting at least two seasons, is coming to Netflix.

Turns out, that was all a simple warm-up act for what was coming later. A 'Directors On Directing' panel followed in Hall H, with Tim Miller (*Deadpool*), Andrew Stanton (*WALL•E*), and Chad Stahelski (*John Wick*) on stage. It was Stahelski who brought the goods, with Reeves returning to the stage to debut a thrilling *John Wick: Chapter 4* teaser. Samurai swords, nunchucks, bucketloads of blood, and Bill Skarsgård's villainous new character Marquis. So far, so John Wick.

5 SHAZAM! FURY OF THE GODS

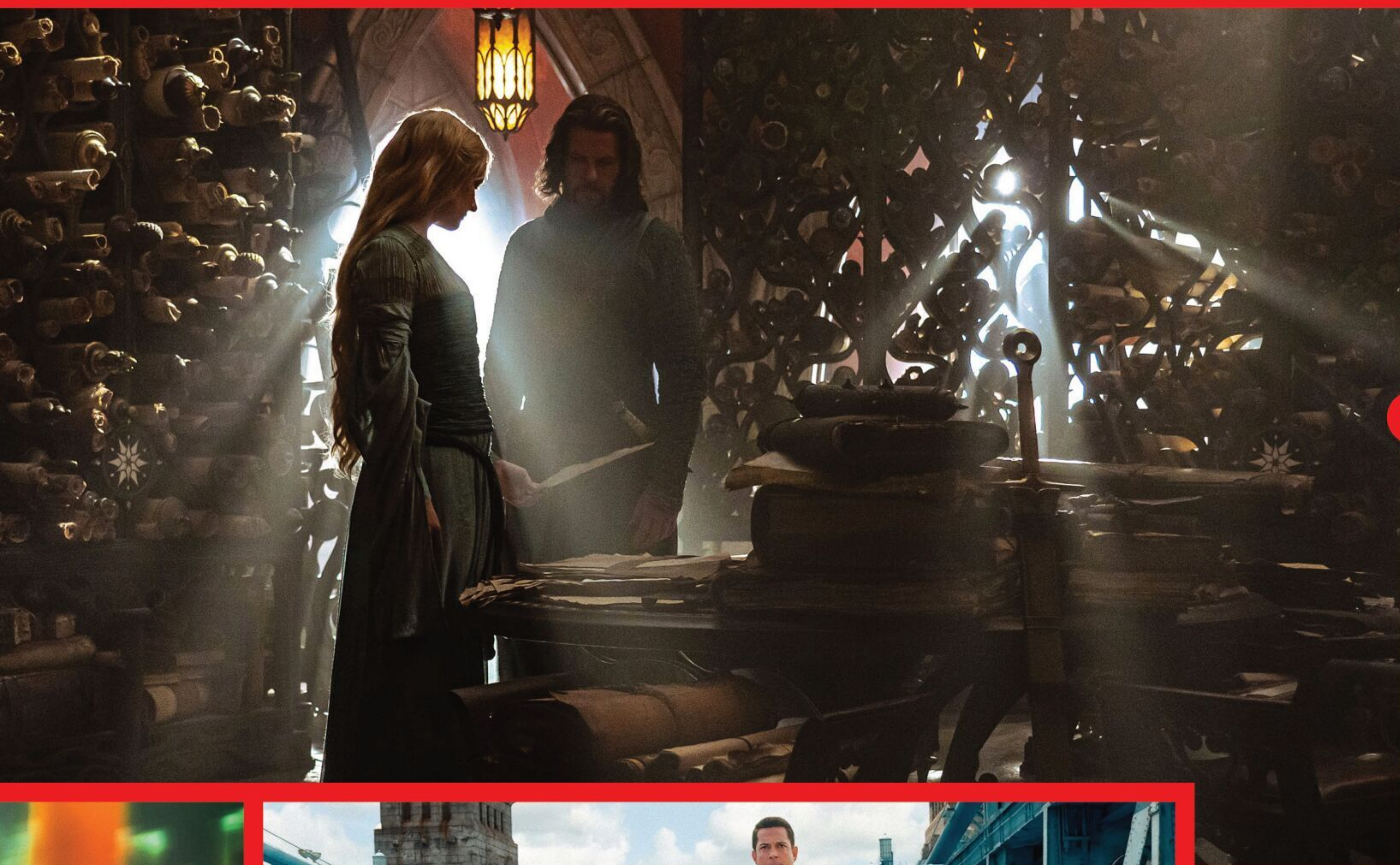
"With a super-family comes super drama," *Shazam!*'s Zachary Levi told Hall H. The upcoming sequel picks up with the "Shazamily" all being imbued with the power of the Gods – and the Gods are not happy about it. Helen Mirren, Lucy Liu and Rachel Zegler are three of those all-powerful beings, and Mirren said that she enjoyed their "pussy power", and loved "kicking the shit" out of Levi.

Mirren, unfortunately, only appeared via Zoom, the British icon saying that the last time she was in San Diego, she was forcibly removed from Comic-Con for getting into a fight that she, of course, won. There was no comment from the other guy. Meanwhile, Levi was unable to answer whether *Shazam* will team up with Superman at some stage. "I can neither confirm nor deny," he said while looking around coyly for DC snipers. "But no..." He looked around again. "But no..." We don't believe him. **JACK SHEPHERD**





2



3



5

DISNEY/MARVEL STUDIOS, EONE, PRIME VIDEO, LIONSGATE, WARNER BROS

HOT RIGHT NOW

ADAM SCOTT

IS READY TO TEAR SONY'S SPIDER-VERSE A NEW ONE...

In AppleTV+'s sci-fi mind-bender *Severance*, Adam Scott played 'innie' and 'outie' Mark, the corporate employee whose private and professional lives are split apart. With his commitment to the role, Scott certainly didn't bifurcate by halves. "I felt like I exposed myself a bit," he told *Vanity Fair*, adding: "I had to take everything that I've gathered over the years and put it into this."

But he clearly has much more to give. In an undisclosed role, Scott will join Dakota Johnson in *Madame Web*, director S.J. Clarkson's Sony Spider-verse variant. Will he play an alterna-verse web-flinger? Such details are beyond *Teasers'* powers of clairvoyancy, but we know he will also front a revival of *Party Down*, the Starz caterers comedy that closed in 2010 after two seasons.

For Scott, *Severance* was "exactly the show" he had toiled for since he hit Hollywood in 1993. Even so, he's notched up plenty of killer comic character work since meeting a messy end in Pinhead-in-space *Hellraiser* movie *Bloodline*. Support roles in shows such as *Party Of Five*, *Boy Meets World* and *Six Feet Under* followed, strong showcases all. He left behind *Party Down*'s pink bow ties to nail a breakthrough role as *Parks And Recreation*'s Ben Wyatt, the nerdy state auditor who banked meme-level fame tearing his *Avatar*-ish (well...) claymation video a new one.

Other comic turns beckoned, from *The Greatest Event In Television History* to *The Good Place*'s taunting demon trickster Trevor and *Loot*'s toxic tech nerd. On film, he nailed *Step Brothers*' corporate blow-hard Derek and *Sleeping With Other People*'s charm-starved doctor; in dramatic roles, he played it steady as *Big Little Lies*' Eddie and landed a lacerating lead in underrated 2009 indie drama *The Vicious Kind*.

In other words, he's got prodigious comic chops and range. "As a viewer, I love it all," he told *GQ*. "I love action and adventure and suspense, all that." As *Madame Web* opens newly expanded universes for Scott, he looks ready for it. As Ben Wyatt might say, "Just hang on to your hat, OK?" **KEVIN HARLEY**

MADAME WEB OPENS ON 6 OCTOBER 2023.
PARTY DOWN IS TBC.



LEIGH KELLY/CONTOUR RA BY GETTY IMAGES

George Clooney and Julia Roberts ignite old romcom flames in *Ticket To Paradise*.

EXCLUSIVE

LOVE ISLAND

TICKET TO PARADISE Ol Parker packs Julia Roberts and George Clooney off to Bali.

Never mind superpowers. Back in the '80s and '90s, the power of love was all that you needed to seduce cinema viewers, with romantic comedies being as prevalent then as superheroes are now. Not any more. Which makes *Ticket To Paradise*, starring George Clooney and Julia Roberts, something of an event.

"I think the tropes became a little too obvious," suggests writer-director Ol Parker (*Mamma Mia: Here We Go Again!*) as to why the genre wilted and withered. "When the ending is predetermined – they fall in love – it's the journey that counts, but it became 'and now we see this, and now we see this, and now we see this...'" He sighs. "The airport dash..."

With its sunshine and sangria, dancing and dolphins, *Ticket To Paradise* seeks to make the journey vibrant once more. Roberts and Clooney play Georgia and David, a divorced couple forced to spend time together when their daughter, Lily (Kaitlyn Dever), invites them to Bali for her marriage to Gede (Maxime Bouttier). Georgia and Dave can't stand the sight of each other, but are united in their desire to talk Lily out of making the same

mistake that ruined their own lives 25 years ago.

"I wanted it to feel like the sequel to a movie that no one had seen," explains Parker. "Like [Richard Linklater's] *Before* movies... 'Let's pick up those guys and see how they're doing 25 years on.' And the only pair that I could think of that really worked for it are George and Julia, because they have such a shared history on screen and off, and we know them so well."

Having shared the screen four times previously (*Ocean's Eleven*, *Confessions Of A Dangerous Mind*, *Ocean's Twelve*, *Money Monster*), Roberts and Clooney, romcom stalwarts back in the day, dazzled cast and crew with their easy chemistry. Parker is adamant that their stars remain undimmed, though he admits that the concept of a movie star has changed somewhat.



Director Ol Parker on set with Roberts and Clooney.

'They have such a shared history on screen and off, and we know them so well'
OL PARKER

"It used to be that a star guaranteed a movie's opening," he says. "That was the definition, that however shit the movie – even if Sandra Bullock made *The Net*, or Tom Cruise made *Cocktail* – people would go to see it. That may not be true any more in a financial sense. But who gives a fuck about financial sense? Stars are just *other*. There's something effortlessly ethereal and other-worldly about them, and when they turn it on..." He shakes his head in joyous disbelief. "Regularly, our jaws would be on the floor. George and Julia would make everyone on the set feel chilled and relaxed, and then they'd do a take and it's, 'Oh, I remember now, it's George Clooney and Julia Roberts.'"

JAMIE GRAHAM

TICKET TO PARADISE OPEN IN CINEMAS ON 16 SEPTEMBER.



EXCLUSIVE

GOOD NEIGHBOUR

SAMARITAN The director of *Overlord* finds the superhero in Sylvester Stallone...

What kid didn't fantasise about having a superhero living next door?" says Julius Avery (*Overlord*, *Son Of A Gun*). It's a great one-line pitch as is, but even more so when that superhero has been missing for 25 years, and is played by Sylvester Stallone with the kind of heart and gravitas he brought to *Cop Land* and *Creed*.

Joe Smith, aka Samaritan, is a garbage man. He used to clean the streets of crime, but gave up long ago, his pain seeing him retreat from the world ("For some people, it's too late to change the damage they've done," he mutters in the trailer). But then the kid who lives across the street, Sam (Javon Walton), latches on to his secret and

teases him out of retirement. The wounded pair develop something of a father-son bond, and it transpires that Joe Smith hasn't just been hiding his powers – he has a fun, irreverent side lurking under his anguish, too.

"[Stallone] is nothing like the characters he's portrayed, like Rambo and Rocky,"

AMAZON



smiles Avery. “In real life, he’s an extrovert prankster. He’s got this really wicked sense of humour. And I think a lot of that will come through in this character he plays in our movie. He’s not monosyllabic! It’s a character from Sly we haven’t seen before.”

Avery was keen to use everything Stallone had to give, both personality-wise and as a film veteran who’s been at the top for almost 50 years. “To have the guy who wrote *Rocky* give you script notes? It’s really cool,” he says. “They were all just gold. I’ve still got them and I’m going to get them framed.” Stallone was

also on hand to guide his 14-year-old co-star, though Walton’s a natural talent with serious intent. You might know him as Stan in *The Umbrella Academy* or Ashtray in *Euphoria*. If not, you’ll likely know him soon enough – his favourite actor is River

‘To have the guy who wrote Rocky give you script notes? It’s really cool’
JULIUS AVERY

Phoenix (“I want to be just like him,” he told Avery) and his audition tape knocked the director’s socks off.

Packed with spectacular set-pieces fashioned by the man who gave us that one-take plane crash in *Overlord*, *Samaritan* is an event movie. But it exists to be something more. “It’s got emotion and action and thrills, but it’s really intimate,” insists Avery. “I think it’s much more interesting to see flawed superheroes in a world where there’s real consequences, real jeopardy, and people die.” **JAMIE GRAHAM**

SAMARITAN STREAMS ON PRIME VIDEO FROM 26 AUGUST.



Are you talkin' to me?

I mean, there's no one else here... so I must be talking to you. When I hear that, obviously I think of the film, but I also think about that shot in the mirror.

I know it was an improvised take from De Niro – I love improvisation. In *People Just Do Nothing*, we heavily script it, but I would say that the end product, probably 30 per cent is improv. You could spend so much time constructing the perfect joke, but it still can't beat a joke that you do on the spot, on set, that makes everyone crack up.

You got a mixtape coming out?

I used to be a battle rapper back in the day. You need to be quick against someone who's looking to humiliate you. He's looking to crush you lyrically. It was always a very aggressive environment. I did that when I was 15 or 16. I was the rap-battle champion of my college, which I'm very proud of. I still have the trophy.

You've gotta ask yourself one question: 'Do I feel lucky?' Well, do ya, punk?

I do feel lucky. But I also feel like you create your own luck. I know that's a big cliché, but you meet some people, and sometimes they're a little bit jealous of your success, and they'll be like, "Oh, it was timing." Or: "You're very lucky." Which is true in some respects, but a lot of people don't see the hard work you put into it when you succeed in something.

How much can you know about yourself if you've never been in a fight?

I remember my first fight, and I got truly, truly humbled. I was always quite a big kid, and I had this reputation of: "Asim can fight." But I lost my first ever proper fight, to a boy with one arm, basically. It did teach me you can't just go around punching people in the stomach because you think you're hard – people will punch you in the face! I am totally a lover, not a fighter, these days.

YOU TALKIN' TO ME?

FILM QUOTES POSE AS QUESTIONS. FILM STARS TRY TO COPE.



IN THE CROSSHAIRS THIS MONTH... ASIM CHAUDHRY

Have you ever danced with the Devil in the pale moonlight?

It brings up a quote from one of my favourite rap songs – Immortal Technique and 'Dance With The Devil'. He finishes the song off by saying, "So when the Devil wants to dance with you, you better say never. Because the dance with the Devil might last you forever." I think I have danced with the devil many times. It's only been a quick dance. A quick boogie, and then I'm out.

What's your favourite scary movie?

I'm in Oslo at the moment. I went to go see Edvard Munch's *Scream* painting. It's an amazing painting about angst and anxiety. The most beautiful thing about the

painting is, his two friends walk on. They're in the background. They don't notice his anxiety. It's such a brilliant way of expressing anxiety and panic attacks. Because I've done interviews and documentaries before when I'm actually, at that time, experiencing severe anxiety and panic attacks, but no one knows because I'm so good at covering them up. But to literally answer the question – I think it has to be *The Shining*. I love horror. I'm actually writing and directing my first feature, a horror film, for BBC Films. I want to do a Jordan Peele. I've had this idea, and BBC Films loved it. So we're going to do that next year.

Why do we feel it's necessary to yak about bullshit in order to be comfortable?

I mean, it's true. I was about to say: that's what we're doing right now! But this has a bit more substance. I think it's a nervous tic some people have, when they feel they have to fill the silences. I definitely do that sometimes. When you're with someone that you're really comfortable with, you can just shut the fuck up and enjoy the peace and quiet.

Does James Bond need the Joker?

That's improvised as well. Originally it was just "Does Richard need Judy?" I love the new *Batman*, though. I was at this party once, and this guy was in this hat, and he had this big beard, and he was a big *People Just Do Nothing* fan. He was sweet, but a bit awkward. The party was really good. There was a lot of cool people there. And I was looking over his shoulder, like that Alan Partridge bit when he's like, "I want to talk to him." I just thought he was a fanboy, and I was being polite. So I was like, "What do you do?" He goes, "I'm kind of going to be the next Batman." And I was like, "Oh, shit. It's Robert Pattinson!" **JORDAN FARLEY**

THE SANDMAN IS STREAMING NOW ON NETFLIX. WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 27 JANUARY 2023. THE HONEYMOON IS CURRENTLY TBC.



Asim Chaudhry plays Abel, brother of Cain (Sanjeev Bhaskar), and owner of pet gargoyle Goldie, in *The Sandman*.

Harry Styles, Emma Corrin and David Dawson's Tom, Marion and Patrick get romantically entangled with each other.

EXCLUSIVE

LAW OF ATTRACTION

MY POLICEMAN Harry Styles' constable is caught in a decades-spanning love triangle.

A love triangle has repercussions across decades in *My Policeman*, an adaptation of Bethan Roberts' 2012 novel. "The material was very much aligned with what I wanted to do for my next film – just being able to bring something personal to it," acclaimed theatre director Michael Grandage tells *Teasers* of his sophomore feature. "But also, I saw the opportunity for a visual language that I wanted to explore with the film."

My Policeman is the story of Tom, Marion and Patrick. In '50s Brighton, Tom (Harry Styles) is a young copper dating schoolteacher Marion (Emma Corrin), but he has powerful feelings for their friend, Patrick (David Dawson). How that tangled web unfolds – at a time when being gay was not only socially frowned upon but actually illegal – is juxtaposed with the trio in the '90s, when Patrick (now Rupert Everett), suffers a stroke, and moves in with the older Marion (Gina McKee) and Tom (Linus Roache).

"What is fascinating is, it never, ever came up," says Grandage, when *Teasers* asks if age make-up or digital trickery was considered for the characters' older selves. "It was always clearly written for the idea of two very separate periods of time. And what's

fascinating to me is that I couldn't even have conceived [*doing it another way*], because I don't think we are the same person 40 years later. I'm certainly not. [*The film*] tries to really investigate how we go on emotional, intellectual journeys over 40 years."

Also crucial to the film are the sex scenes: uncomfortably perfunctory between Marion and Tom, passionately free between Tom and Patrick. Grandage compares the scenes to "a big acting lesson", on which they all worked with an intimacy coordinator. "I actually wanted a discussion with the actors about, 'If we were to take the difficulty that this character has being intimate with Marion, and the ease with what he feels having intimacy with Patrick – let's look at what those two physicalities can feel like, and



Styles and Corrin lend their considerable star power to the film.

how we can tell a story through that, without any words."

As Styles and *The Crown* star Corrin could pull crowds of fans to the film, *My Policeman* could also be educational to a younger generation who might not realise what it was like to be gay in the '50s. "I think it's an essential part of what we're doing, particularly in the current climate, now that we know what may happen in America, in the light of *Roe v Wade* being overturned..." says Grandage. "I think there is a danger for the first time in my life that we could now be going back a little, and this film comes at a point where I think it can be quite educative." **MATT MAYTUM**

MY POLICEMAN OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 21 OCTOBER AND STREAMS ON PRIME VIDEO FROM 4 NOVEMBER.

'I don't think we are the same person 40 years later. I'm certainly not'
MICHAEL GRANDAGE

Emma Mackey stars as real-life author Emily Brontë in *Emily*.

EXCLUSIVE

NEW HEIGHTS

EMILY Emma Mackey stars in Frances O'Connor's take on the secret life of a literary icon.

This film is a kind of meeting of the mythology of Emily Brontë, the biography of Emily Brontë, and then me as a person, what I've gone through in my life," says Frances O'Connor. The actor (*Mansfield Park*, *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*) turns writer/director with *Emily*, a movie about the *Wuthering Heights* author that eschews period movie and biopic expectations.

"I was just interested in exploring female authenticity, and what it's like to be a young woman in the modern era," O'Connor continues. "It's quite a presentational era, I think, in terms of Instagram and that kind of thing. [Emily's] an introvert. She doesn't really like to be on show. And there were things that I related to as a young actress coming up through the ranks."

Here, *Sex Education*'s Emma Mackey portrays the author ("There's just something very animal about her, and I think that really translates across on screen"), and the film focuses on key relationships during the crucial time in her short life that forged her as a writer. There are sisters Charlotte (Alexandra Dowling) and Anne (Amelia Gething), celebrated writers also. "It was kind of a power struggle between [Emily and Charlotte]," explains O'Connor.

Then there's older brother Branwell (Fionn Whitehead). "He's so human," says O'Connor. "That's the thing I'm trying to do with these characters – make them human, so that they reflect back to the people watching the film who they are as well, and make them think about their lives."

Finally, a simmering, forbidden attraction builds between Emily and local clergyman William Weightman (Oliver Jackson-Cohen), who's roped into giving her French lessons. "So much of it is true in terms of chronology," says O'Connor of her film's events, which fills in some blanks in Emily's unwritten history, while giving it a *Wuthering Heights* flavour. "Because she's lesser-known in a way... that also makes her more mysterious, and it's very evocative, and so is her novel. But I also wanted to give her this amazing hidden life."

Co-star Alexandra Dowling masks up as Charlotte.



When *Teasers* asks O'Connor if she's worried she'll upset the purists, she laughs it off. "I don't care," she says. "I hope I piss them off. I feel like that's what we should be doing with our gods and our heroes. We should be able to tear them down, and bring them back up in a way that speaks to us more now."

With that in mind, O'Connor's hoping to attract an audience beyond those usually drawn to literary biopics. "I don't really think of it as a period film," she concludes. "I feel like it's a story about a very complicated woman who's trying to find herself in a society that maybe doesn't really see her. I feel like that hopefully is universal, and that it would appeal to young people."

MATT MAYTUM

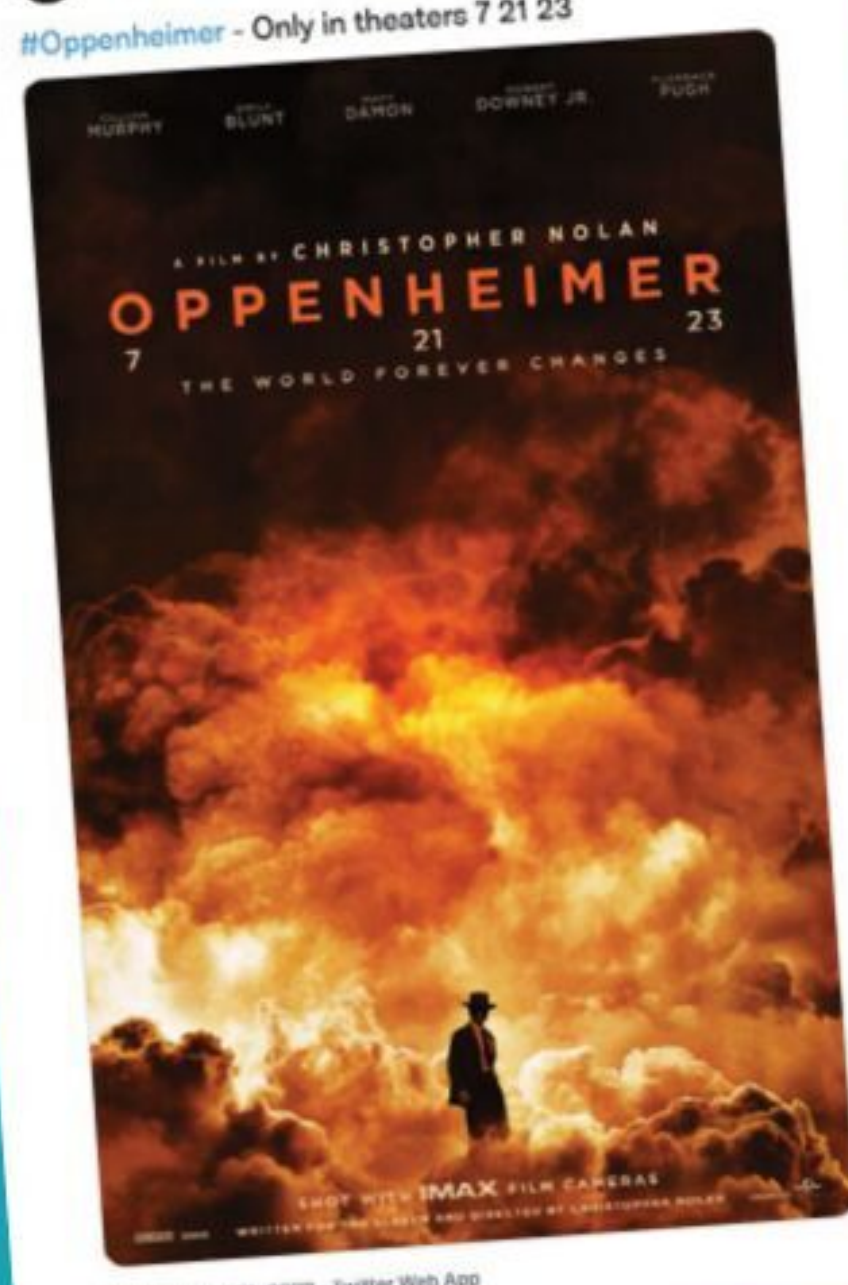
'That's the thing I'm trying to do with these characters - make them human'
FRANCES O'CONNOR

EMILY OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 14 OCTOBER.



“AVENGERS FILMS REALLY SHOULD BE THE CAPPER TO A SAGA.”

KEVIN FEIGE EXPLAINS WHY WE AREN'T GETTING A FULL-STRENGTH MARVEL TEAM-UP TILL THE END OF THE MULTIVERSE SAGA IN 2025.



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“Anyone who says words hurt has never been punched in the face.”

CHRIS ROCK SPEAKS OUT ON THAT OSCARS SLAP.



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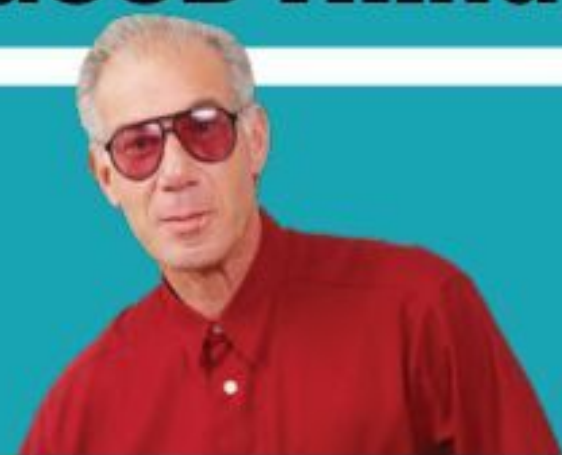
ZOOEY DESCHANEL STICKS UP FOR HER 500 DAYS OF SUMMER CHARACTER.

FIELD OF DREAMS

Todd Field's *TÁR* - the director's first film in 16 years - will premiere at the Venice Film Festival. It stars Cate Blanchett as an acclaimed composer.



GOOD THING



BAD THING



BOBRAFELSON RIP

Five Easy Pieces director Bob Rafelson has died at the age of 89. Rafelson was a key player in the American New Wave.



“HE WAS ACTUALLY QUITE RUDE. HE FARTED IN MY FACE... HE DID IT DELIBERATELY, RIGHT IN MY FACE.”

MIRIAM MARGOLYES CLAIMS THAT ARNIE INTENTIONALLY BROKE WIND WHILE SHOOTING *END OF DAYS*.

“IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A DREAM. MAYBE WHEN THEY NEED AN OLDER BATMAN.”

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EXCLUSIVE

Sopo Dirisu returns as informant Elliot Finch.

CAPITAL PAIN

GANGS OF LONDON Corin Hardy returns to the mean streets of London for Season 2...

When I was young, I wanted to be a ninja," says director Corin Hardy (*The Hallow*, *The Nun*). He didn't realise that dream, but his love of martial arts movies – and westerns, and horror, and Korean revenge thrillers – led to his appointment directing episodes of *Gangs Of London*, the Sky Original series co-created by Gareth Evans (*The Raid*, *Apostle*) that shuffled gritty crime elements with heightened genre tropes to become a record-smashing hit.

Now *Gangs* is back for a second series. And with Evans busy on his action-thriller feature *Havoc*, Hardy has overseen it, while also directing both the first two and last two of the eight episodes. Season One, lest you forget, ended with the collapse of the Wallace-Dumani crime empire. Season Two picks up a year later, with the Investors bringing in a new gang led by the brutal Koba (Waleed Zuaiter). But there's more to Koba than just muscle and malice.

"We were really careful to try and create a character who isn't just a tough, evil guy," says Hardy. "He's got a disarming charisma. He's charming and... strange. I always

loved what Gary Oldman brought to *Leon*, or Alan Rickman in *Die Hard*. These characters who you love as much as fear."

Also new on the block is Saba (Jasmine Armando), part of a gang of Algerians swept into the action. *Gangs*, points out Hardy, covers "different levels of criminals, from the ground up to the skyscraper money launderers and politicians", and Saba starts at the bottom. "She's a very smart, tough cookie who's studying law and isn't really part of that world, and through the events

'What I did try to do is not repeat something we've seen before'
CORIN HARDY

that unfold in her family, she's drawn deeper into it," Hardy explains.

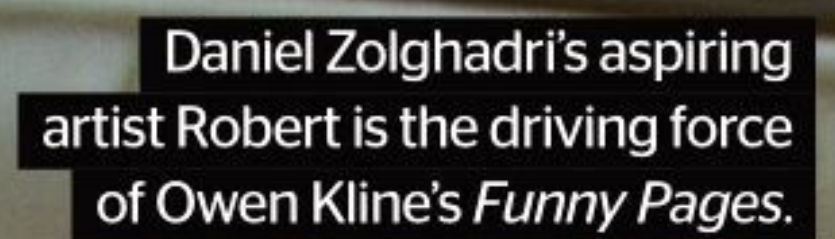
Whether Joe Cole's Sean Wallace will be on show is a mystery – his death seemed indisputable at the climax of S1, but rumours persist of a return. But Sopo Dirisu's police informant Elliot Finch is certainly back – he's spent the year between seasons carrying out killings abroad for the Investors, and is now called back to London to support Koba. Only Finch is very much his own man, so who knows how that will play out?

What we do know is that set-pieces will plummet jaws. "One hundred per cent!" beams Hardy. "Of course we've set out to continue the things that got us excited and that got viewers excited. But what I did try to do is not repeat something we've seen before. Whether it's combat, hand-to-hand, shootouts, car sequences... we try to push them into unexpected areas. An unexpected quality, or a relentlessness, is part of the *Gangs* recipe."

A favourite meal with some mouth-watering new ingredients? Pile our plates high. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

GANGS OF LONDON S2 STARTS ON SKY ATLANTIC AND NOW IN OCTOBER.





NEXT BIG THING

BELLA RAMSEY IS FLYING HIGH...

Best known as fearsome scene-stealer Lyanna Mormont in *Game Of Thrones*, Bella Ramsey has emerged as one of Westeros' most in-demand alumni. Soon, she'll star as the effervescent title character in Lena Dunham's medieval comedy *Catherine Called Birdy*, and early next year she'll appear as Ellie, alongside Pedro Pascal's Joel, in HBO's anticipated adaptation of the acclaimed videogame *The Last Of Us*.

Birdy lives in the late 13th century, but has modern sensibilities. Could you relate?

Birdy and me are stupidly similar. Her whole energy and spirit are naturally like my energy and spirit, but she has it in abundance. I've never been on a shoot where I've laughed so much, or tried not to laugh so much.

***Game Of Thrones* was your first job. How did you cope?**

I've enjoyed being thrown in at the deep end, and definitely that experience was the best thing for me. Every actor has a different way of doing it. My way is that I have no idea what I'm doing [laughs]. I'm going to continue having no idea what I'm doing, and hope for the best.

Did you always want to act?

I never really wanted to be an actor. Now if I go too long without being on a set, I get withdrawal symptoms. I just want to be in the industry, even if it's writing or directing. I've written a film, and hopefully we'll be making that at some point next year.

How have you approached playing Ellie in *The Last Of Us*?

She will feel familiar to fans of the game, but is not meant to be a replica of Ashley Johnson's Ellie. At the beginning of the show, I was like, "I'm definitely going to play the game after." But now I'm not so sure. When we'd watch gameplay of what we'd [filmed] the day before, it was strange, watching a version of what you did. I just need a really good friend to laugh at me when I walk into walls, and then I'll enjoy it. **JORDAN FARLEY**

CATHERINE CALLED BIRDY OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 23 SEPTEMBER AND STREAMS ON PRIME VIDEO FROM 7 OCTOBER.



SPOILER
ALERT!

Steven Yeun plays Jupe, traumatised by Gordy as a child.

CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

GORDY THE CHIMP

IS NOPE'S PREDATORY PRIMATE AN EXTRANEOUS SUBPLOT, OR SOMETHING DEEPER?



JORDAN FARLEY
@JORDANFARLEY

As you might well expect, Jordan Peele's *Nope* opens with the unexpected. On the set of a sitcom, a blood-soaked chimp called Gordy has bludgeoned, mauled and maimed several of his cast

mates. We later learn that child star Ricky 'Jupe' Park (Jacob Kim) witnessed the attack, and survived – an experience that has a profound impact on the person he becomes (played by Steven Yeun) and his relationship with forces beyond his control.

"But isn't this a film about aliens?" you might well ask yourself. Yes and no. As with *Get Out* and *Us*, *Nope* is a film loaded with themes that resonate beyond surface level genre thrills. In no small part, *Nope* is a film about filmmaking, and the monetisation of our addiction to spectacle, as the Haywoods (Daniel Kaluuya's OJ and Keke Palmer's Emerald) put life and limb on the line in pursuit of the impossible shot of 'Jean Jacket'



'IN NO SMALL PART, NOPE IS A FILM ABOUT FILMMAKING'

– an extraterrestrial (or is it?) lifeform that has claimed the Haywoods' ranch and the surrounding plains as its hunting grounds.

Through Gordy and Jupe, it's clear that *Nope* is also about respecting a natural world that we can't hope to tame, and what happens when we seek to exploit it. Jupe,

we learn, is profiting from his tragic past, setting up a ghoulish museum to Gordy's rampage in the back of his office. It comes as little surprise when we discover that Jupe has also been profiting off Jean Jacket, putting on a show for paying audiences, with no thought to the danger he's putting them in. Miraculously unharmed as a child, Jupe naively overplays his hand with Jean Jacket and gets himself and 40-or-so patrons sucked up into oblivion.

OJ on the other hand, thanks to his father's teachings, recognises Jean Jacket for what it is – an apex predator that must be respected on its own terms. The echoes between Jupe and OJ's parallel trajectories, and how their pasts inform the present, is a message of paramount importance in *Nope*. But it's a message that fails to hit as clearly, or powerfully, as *Get Out*'s benevolent racism, or the haves/have nots parable of *Us*, or *Nope*'s own preoccupation with spectacle. Gordy may be in service of one metaphor too many in *Nope*, but he is never a primate without purpose.

UNIVERSAL

Zac Efron's Chickie goes on a drinks run like no other.



ZAC EFRON

What were your initial reactions to the script?

When I read it start to finish, I was blown away. I don't really know how to describe it. Typically, it can take me anywhere from a day to a week to finish a script. And this one just jumped off the page. I felt like I was very in tune with the perspective and the point of view of this character. I love the seriousness of the subject matter.

How did you set about researching the war in Vietnam?

We took extra care to do our due diligence, to make sure that it felt authentic. And luckily, we had a tremendous team around us making sure that that can all happen. So yes, we had a military advisor named Hans Bush who was instrumental in all of the battle etiquettes, in helping us with our rifles, with our lingo, the different behaviours that soldiers have. He was full of fantastic advice.

Did you carry a real bag of beers throughout? It looks heavy!

Yeah, yeah, we did. We use the same bag in the entire shoot. So that thing got stinky and mouldy and disgusting. It was in the trenches with us. I never set that bag down. It was tremendously heavy! **JAMES MOTTRAM**

ARMY OF ONE

THE GREATEST BEER RUN EVER Peter Farrelly follows Green Book with another American odyssey...

When Peter Farrelly was in the middle of making his Oscar-winning *Green Book*, his next movie materialised. A friend sent him a copy of a short documentary, *The Greatest Beer Run Ever*, about John 'Chickie' Donohue. During the Vietnam conflict, the patriotic Chickie decided to visit his American friends fighting in southeast Asia, bringing them beers to say thank you for your service. "As soon as I saw that, I wanted to do it," says Farrelly. "It wasn't a plan. It's what the universe brought me – it just dropped in my lap."

Casting Zac Efron as Chickie, Farrelly immediately felt the resonance of Chickie's lunatic dash into the middle of a war zone – one that he did in the spur of the moment, with no visa, no security, and without any military training. "I think that a lot of the themes in this story are happening today. We're in the middle of wars all over the place. And this is a movie about war and about friendship and about really the pointlessness of many wars, and it certainly rings true now with what's happening in the world."

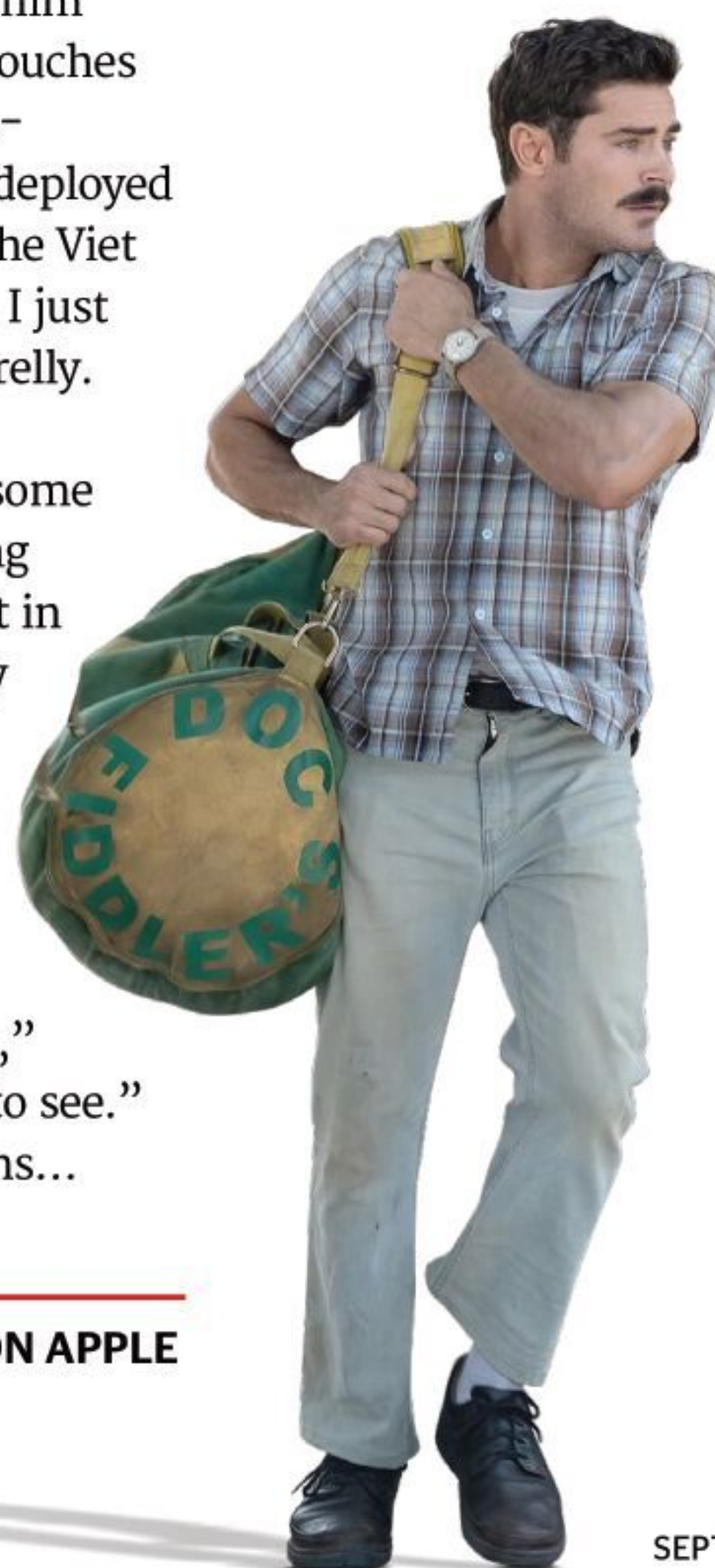
Quite how Chickie got as far as he did, carting a bulging sack of Budweisers from

Saigon into designated hotspots, is what makes *The Greatest Ever Beer Run* highly entertaining. But there's an underlying seriousness, with Chickie's civilian clothing seeing him frequently mistaken for CIA. Farrelly touches on the Phoenix Program, a violent CIA-initiated use of counterterrorism that deployed torture and even murder to suppress the Viet Cong. "As I was researching the story, I just couldn't let it go on unseen," says Farrelly. "It's never been told."

Alongside Efron, Farrelly also cast some veterans – of the film world – including Russell Crowe, as a photojournalist out in 'Nam, and Bill Murray, as a New Jersey bar owner back in Chickie's 'hood. Farrelly, who directed Murray in 1996 bowling comedy *Kingpin*, loved watching the master comic in action with Efron. "I didn't cut the camera... they just kept doing it again and again," he says. "It was just a beautiful thing to see." Time then to crack open a couple of tins...

JAMES MOTTRAM

THE GREATEST BEER RUN EVER IS ON APPLE TV+ ON 30 SEPTEMBER.



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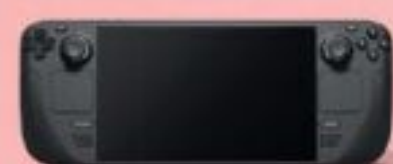
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Asa Butterfield stands out among the cast of *Flux Gourmet*.

EXCLUSIVE

EATING DISORDER

FLUX GOURMET Peter Strickland's tale of a culinary collective deserves a Michelin star...

British filmmaker Peter Strickland's latest curiosity, *Flux Gourmet*, grew from a very unusual seed. "There's a frustration how food allergies and intolerances are dealt with [on film]," he says. "You look at [2018 comedy] *The Festival*... Noel Fielding eats a shrimp and his face swells up. I would never say cancel [it]. But I guess I wanted to make an alternative, really, and look at it more seriously."

Even in real life, people are reluctant to do so. Strickland (*The Duke Of Burgundy*, *In Fabric*) remembers a friend telling him about being on a plane with her son, who has a peanut allergy. "The guy next to him was eating peanuts and she asked him to stop, explained to him why, and he just said, 'It's my free right to eat peanuts!'"

While there are no aircraft in *Flux Gourmet*, it does take place in a contained space – a country house run by art patron Jan Stevens (Gwendoline Christie), who hosts a residency for a "sonic collective", a radical group of musicians (including Asa Butterfield and Strickland regular Fatma Mohamed) who create performance art from cooking. Recording the sounds food makes, it's not as weird as it seems. Back in 1996, Strickland was part of The

Sonic Catering Band. "We did vaguely similar things," he says.

The story unfolds as journalist Stones (Makis Papadimitriou) embeds himself in the group, documenting their every move, while suffering from an increasingly embarrassing digestive issue. "Somehow those two things fed into each other: the culinary collective who are interested in shocking people, and suddenly here comes along an unwitting victim who can be exploited. And then it poses all these questions about the privacy of the body and how much of yourself should you reveal for the sake of art."

Shooting in a stately home near York, with all the cast in one locale, it should've been a doddle. "I was told, 'This is going to be easiest film you ever make,'" recalls Strickland. "And it turned out to be the most difficult

'It poses all these questions about the privacy of the body'
PETER STRICKLAND

film ever." After four false starts, the production almost collapsed when Strickland's landlady announced she was selling off his home. "She wouldn't back off. It was a nightmare." Once past that, he only had 14 days to film – three less than his 2009 debut *Katalin Varga*.

Yet none of the stresses show in an artful film that toys with shock value, just as Pasolini's fascism tale *Salò* did. Despite featuring scatological moments and even a live colonoscopy, Strickland promises he's not out to turn our stomachs with body horror. "To me, I get shocked very easily. Extreme violence shocks me. I don't like it. My films are not that violent at all. Most directors could easily be way more shocking than me." **JAMES MOTTRAM**

FLUX GOURMET OPENS IN CINEMAS FROM 30 SEPTEMBER.



Let's hope that's just the result of a ketchup bottle gone boom...

NOZOMI



Sally Hawkins takes on the establishment as the real-life Philippa Langley.

EXCLUSIVE

LOOKING FOR RICHARD

THE LOST KING Sally Hawkins has a hunch there's a king buried in a car park in Stephen Frears' dramatisation of Richard III's rediscovery.

Iloathe Julian Fellowes," declares Steve Coogan with a virulence that catches *Teasers* unawares. "The things he produces are love letters to the establishment, which makes me feel slightly nauseous." Given their respective political persuasions (Coogan is a staunch and public supporter of the Labour Party, while Baron Fellowes of West Stafford sits as a Conservative peer in the House of Lords), a level of antipathy is maybe to be expected.

In Coogan's case, however, this extends to the *Downton Abbey* creator's creative milieu: a world of inherited wealth and hereditary privilege that can't help but irk the satirical brain that gave us Alan Partridge.

Which explains why he and writing partner Jeff Pope were drawn to the story of Philippa Langley, an amateur historian and Richard III enthusiast who instigated the search which resulted in his remains being discovered in

2012. Convinced the late king could be found beneath a council car park in Leicester, Langley defied expert opinion and the scepticism of academics and followed her gut. Her intuition led to the exhumation and 2015 reburial of England's last Plantagenet ruler. It also bolstered endeavours to redeem the reputation of a monarch who, thanks in no small part to Shakespeare's "history" play, has been vilified relentlessly for more than 400 years.

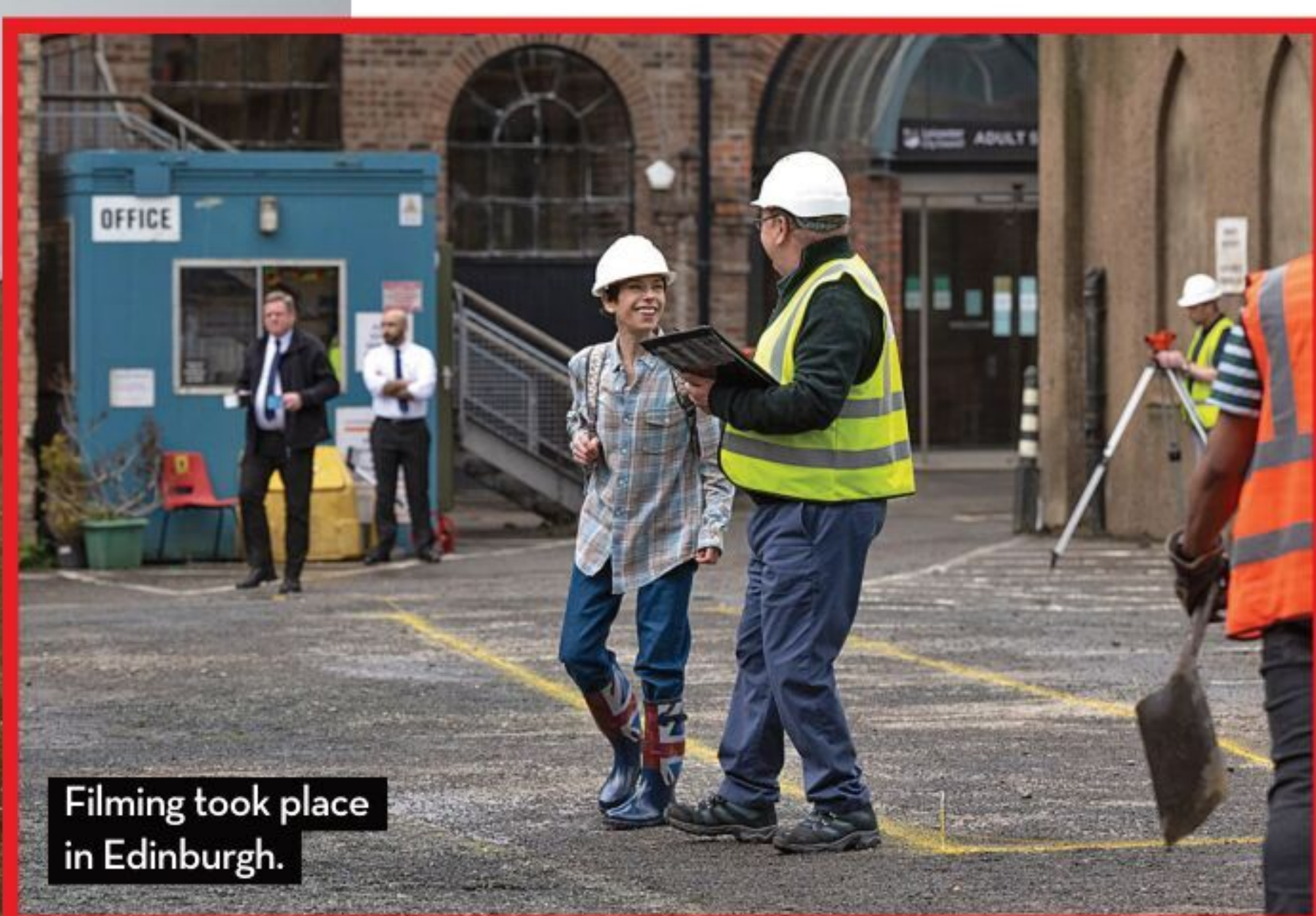
"I like the idea of throwing a stick in the spokes of the establishment," Coogan continues. "I feel I can sleep much better at night when I do that. Philippa was an amateur who went up against the establishment, so it fit the bill. The bare bones of the story, if you'll excuse the pun, were such that I knew there was a real human story to tell." A number of writers, *The Crown*'s Peter Morgan among them, had a stab at condensing Langley's eight-year campaign into a workable screenplay. "But in the end it was taking too long so I just said to Jeff, 'Why don't we write it?'" says Coogan. "We like stuff that's got substance and is also entertaining, and this had all the components we love."

Given the success of *Philomena*, the 2013 drama about a Catholic mum's search for her son that Coogan and Pope ended up winning a BAFTA for, it seemed logical to approach that film's director, the veteran Stephen Frears, to direct *The Lost King*. "He's the devil we know," says Coogan of an 81-year-old stalwart who, thanks to films like *The Queen*

'We like stuff that's got substance and is also entertaining'
STEVE COOGAN



Steve Coogan plays Langley's estranged husband John.



Filming took place in Edinburgh.



and *Victoria & Abdul*, is no stranger to uncovering royalty. "He's very robust, he knows what he's doing and he wants to help tell the story." Frears, for his part, was immediately intrigued by a herstory he describes as both "absurd and extraordinary". "It takes the piss out of the establishment and I'm all for that," he chuckles. "And it's a good story about a woman who worked out what had to be done and did it."

The Langley we see in Frears' film doggedly pursues her cause despite having two sons to raise and a chronic fatigue condition. According to Frears, the actress who played her would need "both frailty and strength" – qualities he saw in abundance in *The Shape Of Water*'s Sally Hawkins. When casting her amicably estranged husband John, meanwhile, he didn't need to look far. "I was going to be there anyway as I'm a writer and producer," smiles Coogan. "It was an interesting supporting role that was within my capabilities, so I thought I might as well do it."

One of *The Lost King*'s bolder dramatic flourishes is to make King Richard manifest as Philippa's ghostly companion and confidante. The role is played by Harry Lloyd (*Game Of Thrones*' Viserys Targaryen), who also appears as an actor portraying Shakespeare's Richard III didn't actually appear in Philippa's mind," says Coogan. "But she did say she imagined having conversations with

him, so we thought we would push that idea and bring him to life." "He's sort of a poltergeist," says Frears, who picked Lloyd because he was "heroic and had a sense of humour". "We have to deal with both the 15th century and now, so that's what the boys came up with."

One thing that wasn't in the ether was filming in Leicester itself, which according to the director has become something of a Crookback theme park. "It's all Richard in Leicester now," he says. "The grave itself is now glassed over, so it was easier to do it somewhere else." That somewhere else was the picturesque city of Edinburgh, although that too was not without a few problems. "Leicester is a city of red brick while Edinburgh is made of granite, so it was difficult finding red brick buildings," Frears continues. "I think there's two, and I think we used both of them."

With its classy cast, fact-inspired story and touching combination of the historical and the personal, *The Lost King* has a lot more in common with *Philomena* than just its central team of creatives. Indeed, it's something Coogan recalls Frears joking about when he was initially approached. "He said 'Oh, so you've swapped evil nuns for evil dons,'" the actor says. "It's a slight over-simplification, but I suppose there is a certain truth in that." **NEIL SMITH**

THE LOST KING OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 7 OCTOBER.



Harry Lloyd is Langley's vision of Richard III.

Grace Caroline Currey and Virginia Gardner play two friends who decide to scale a 2,000ft radio tower.

EXCLUSIVE

IN THE HEIGHTS

FALL Scott Mann's vertigo-inducing thriller will flip your stomach upside down...

I think we all have this innate fear of heights," says director Scott Mann (*Final Score*). "Triggering that for entertainment value is quite a thing." He's not kidding either, with his new film *Fall* destined to terrify even the hardest of climbers. The story sees two daredevil women, social media-obsessed Hunter (*Halloween's* Virginia Gardner) and her friend Becky (*Shazam!'s* Grace Caroline Currey), scale a 2000-foot radio tower in the desert for kicks, only to become stranded at the top. Prepare to feel woozy. "Sweaty palms," grins Mann, "was the brief."

Inspired by a real tower in Arizona (used for bouncing radio and TV signals across the States), Mann set out to recreate the structure with as much authenticity as possible. Finding the perfect spot, Shadow Mountain, some 40 minutes outside of Victorville, California, the production built the very top of the tower at the top of the peak. Rigging the set was the team who helped Tom Cruise climb the Burj Khalifa on *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol*. But that was only the beginning of an arduous shoot.

"We're at the top of this mountain in the middle of the desert with blistering, record-breaking heat," recalls Mann, when *Teasers* grabs him on Zoom for a chat. "We had hurricanes. We had locust attacks.

We had all kinds of shit happen. And it threw it at the production. At one point, one of the towers blew down. It was really quite intense as a shoot, and we were caught up in this thing. But everyone was going for it at the end the day. I think we were all there for a single purpose."

While the actors both had stunt doubles, Mann points out how much Currey and Gardner did themselves. "I think that's why the movie works," he says. The first time he went up the tower with the actors, "Grace just cried when she got to the top, partly out of relief." Yet these troopers ascended the set's dizzy heights daily, staying up for as long as possible. "Really the shooting period was dictated by their bladders," laughs Mann. "That was the only time

'At one point, one of the towers blew down. It was really quite intense'
SCOTT MANN

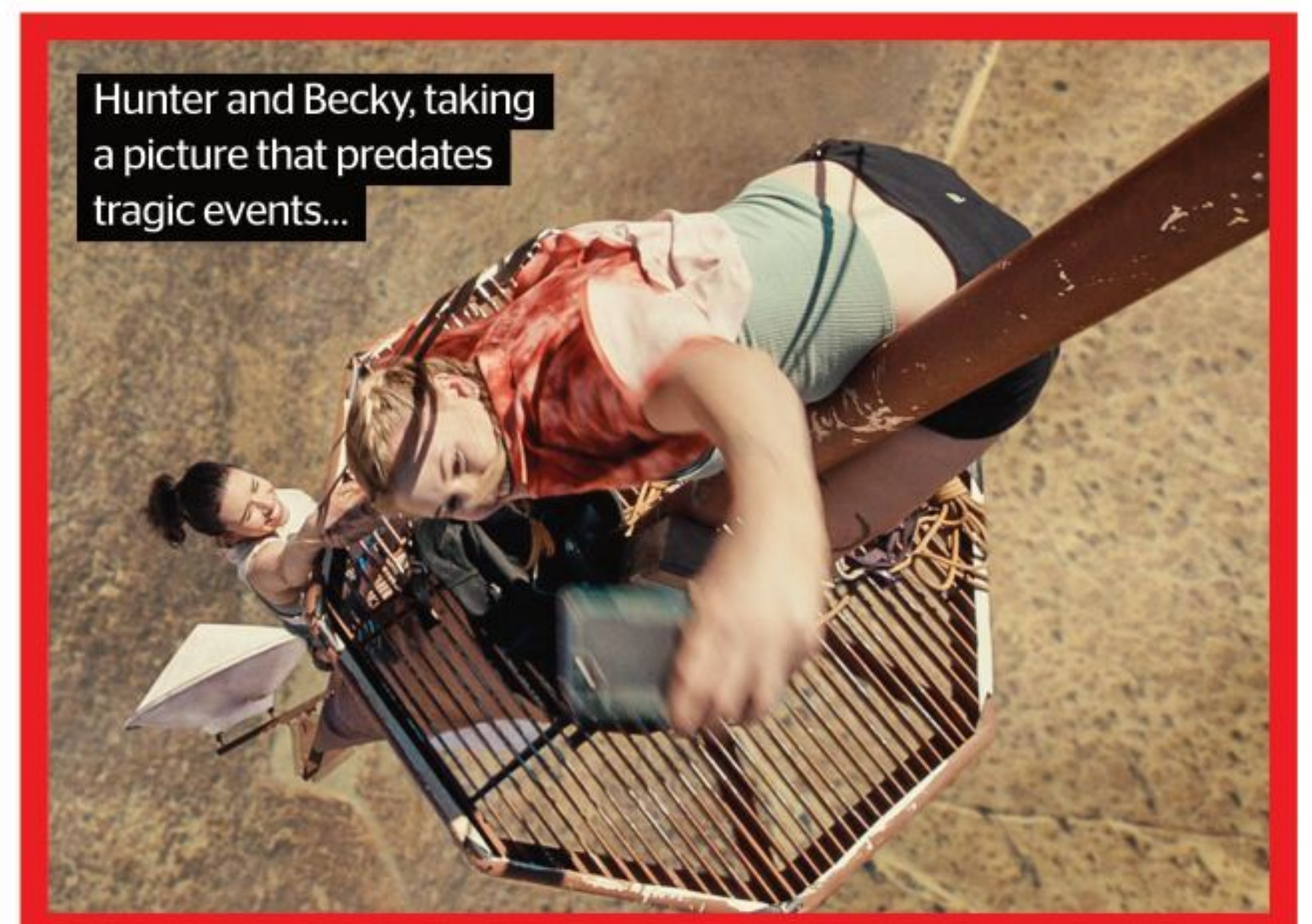
they had to come down."

While *Fall* definitely, er, falls into the realm of thrillers, without giving too much away, it does flirt with other genres. "We did kind of conceive it as a horror," says Mann. "There's different flavours of height fear and different forms of horror that fall within this space. It was very much all based around how you want to experience something. I honestly looked at it a bit like a theme-park ride. You go on this journey, and you experience it together." So make sure you're with someone in the cinema – you'll be wanting to grip their hand for support.

JAMES MOTTRAM

FALL OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 2 SEPTEMBER.

Hunter and Becky, taking a picture that predates tragic events...



SIGNATURE

BETWEEN TAKES

ALAN CUMMING

THE MY OLD SCHOOL STAR ON LIP-SYNCING AND STOLEN SOFAS...



What's the first thing you do when you arrive on set?

I look at the call sheet, and try to remember people's names. On some films, people put stickers on, saying, 'Hello, my name is...' When I've directed or produced I make people do that. After being on a set for weeks I find it really hard to go, "What's your name again?"

What do you take on set with you?

I always overpack. One of the things about being on a set is, you get up, you go to work, and then take your clothes off. So there's a weird thing where you forget who you are, and what your style is. So I always try to maintain my sense of style by packing too many things.

Any on-set superstitions?

When I sit down in the make-up chair for the first time I always say, "I'd like a light perm, some blue eye shadow and blusher and lips." It's amazing how sometimes that backfires. I did that film *Emma* and they went, "Actually, we were thinking of taking you down a couple of tones, and curling your hair." So I ended up with a red perm, which they thought I had a premonition about.

How did the making of *My Old School* differ from a regular shoot?

It was this really weird thing where they just played a tape on a loop, which I lip-sync to. So it was torture for the crew, because it was just the same thing again and again, and me going, "Did I get it? Do you think I got it?" But the great thing is that at Club Cumming, my club in New York, I've got more ammunition to throw shade on drag queens if they don't know the words, because I've lip-synced an entire fucking film!

Best on-set experience?

I sung in the Spice Girls film. It was nuts – you're making a film with the Spice Girls at the height of their fame, before it all imploded. It was just joyful and gorgeous and positive and hilarious. And *The Anniversary Party*. I did it with Jennifer Jason Leigh. That was a really magical time.



'I FOUND A CALL SHEET THAT HAS 2.12AM AS MY PICKUP TIME. REBECCA ROMIJN AND I WOULD JUST CRY'



Alan Cumming plays/lip-syncs Brandon in *My Old School*.

Have you ever taken anything from a film set?

What I'm wearing now, these trousers [and braces] – are from *Schmigadoon!* You can see the fake blood stains on them, because I play a sort of Sweeney Todd character. I have a sofa from *Spy Kids*. I have the helmet I wore as The Great Gazoo in *The Flintstones In Viva Rock Vegas*. I have a big polystyrene plinth from *GoldenEye*. At the end of filming, they said, "Would you like this model of yourself, frozen, dead?" I was like, "No." But now I wish I had because it's too unattractive. I could have destroyed that.

What's the longest day you've ever spent on a film set?

During lockdown, I auctioned off my Nightcrawler teeth, but I also found a call sheet that has 2.12am as my pickup time. Rebecca Romijn and I would just cry, and commiserate about how awful it was. One time they wanted me to not take the make-up off, but go home and [sleep in the make-up]. I actually remember saying to them, "What if I want to have sex?"

Most memorable end-of-shoot gift?

I gave the crew of *Instinct* a joint with 'Instinct' monogrammed on the roach. The whole place stank of weed. I thought everyone was going to be arrested.

Most embarrassing moment on set?

I did this thing a thousand years ago for Disneyland Paris called CinéMagique, and I was a wizard – big beard and moustache, and big, long nails. I had such fun. But then, of course, I have to go to the loo, and I've got these huge talons. I hadn't quite factored in what this was going to mean. A wardrobe person had to pull down my zip, and pull my pants down. Then I, gingerly, with my big talons, held my penis. I was terrified I was going to lacerate myself. When you see programmes like *The Real Housewives* and all these girls have their long, acrylic nails, I always think of me trying to pee as a wizard. **JORDAN FARLEY**

MY OLD SCHOOL OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 19 AUGUST.

IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A FILM JOURNALIST

Editor-at-Large **JAMIE GRAHAM** lifts the lid on film journalism.

A couple of weeks ago I went to the cinema to see *The Black Phone* and the *Nope* trailer played beforehand. Now the first trailer for Jordan Peele's third feature was just right. It dealt its cards face down, and any images we glimpsed, devoid of context, were strikingly ominous, like being dealt Death in your tarot hand. But I'd heard this second trailer gives everything away, so I screwed shut my eyes and stuck my fingers in my ears and hummed noisily – I hate to think what the woman two seats along must have thought – and even then I heard snatches of dialogue that spoiled surprises.

Such is the way with modern-day trailers. *The Black Phone*, the film I was seated to see, had its every beat blown by marketing bods, and *Elvis* dropped three trailers in quick succession to show us the entire film. Just yesterday I watched the trailer for romcom *Ticket To Paradise* before

interviewing writer-director Ol Parker, and it was less an ad for the movie than a whistlestop tour through the entire thing. Factor in the featurettes that now frequently drop online in the months and weeks leading up to a film's release and the barrage of TV spots that hit just before, and there really is nothing left to see.

WILLY WONKY

This, of course, is nothing new. In 1993, the *Free Willy* trailer showed captive whale Willy indeed being freed. A preview for 2000 drama *Cast Away* revealed that Tom Hanks escapes his desert island. In 2002, *The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers* trailer gave away Gandalf's return (sure, the book had been out for 48 years, but many viewers came to Peter Jackson's adaptation fresh). And a preview for 2015's *Terminator Genisys* blew the film's one surprise by showing saviour John Connor to be a machine.

Anything, it seems, is up for grabs, with the final shot

THIS MONTH...
TRAILER TRASHING

'IT'S THE FILMMAKERS WHO I FEEL SORRY FOR'

of 2007's *Paranormal Activity* appearing in the trailer, and, worse still, the final shot of *Quarantine*, the naff US remake of ace Spanish horror *[Rec]*, slapped on its poster. It's the filmmakers, as much as the viewers, who I feel sorry for – few directors have any say in the marketing of their films. Just last month I interviewed *Bullet Train* helmer David Leitch and asked if Sandra Bullock appears properly in the movie, or will we only hear her voice and see her mouth speaking into a phone, like in the trailer? He opted not to spoil it for viewers. Three weeks later, a second trailer dropped showing Sandy getting in on the action.

BIG REVEALS

Look, I get it – several trailers of the same movie are cut together and thrust before focus groups, and it's the ones with most bang for buck that win out. In a super-competitive market spread over many platforms, something

special is needed to turn heads in your direction. Hence revealing John Connor as a 'bot – it's new and exciting and will tease punters back to a tired franchise.

So, yes, I get it. But that doesn't mean I have to like it. I pine for the halcyon days of the late-'70s and early '80s, when I first started going to the cinema and renting videos. Back then, trailers were short and sharp, offering a hint of plot and a taste of atmosphere while preserving the big shocks and surprises for the cinema. Just Google the classic trailer for Ridley Scott's 1979 *Alien*; it's a mini-masterpiece of pulsing dread and unstoppable momentum. And yet, in space, no one will hear me vent spleen, because it refuses to hatch its secrets. It worked – viewers ran pell-mell to the cinema to discover WTF they'd just seen. Or rather, *felt*.

So when it comes to modern-day trailers, it's a big "Nope" from me.



When it comes to sharing spoilers in trailers, just say *Nope*.



JAMIE WILL RETURN NEXT ISSUE... FOR MORE MISADVENTURES, FOLLOW: @JAMIE_GRAHAM9 ON TWITTER.

5 THINGS

MATE WATCH

I HATE YOU From Friday Night Dinner to besties behaving badly...

1 MESSY PLAY

I Hate You is a predictably bizarre and hilarious new sitcom from the dream-team pairing of writer Robert Popper (*Friday Night Dinner*) and director Damon Beesley (*The Inbetweeners*). Newcomer Melissa Saint and Tanya Reynolds (*Sex Education*) star as Becca and Charlie, flatmates and best friends who get into scrapes involving septuagenarian boyfriends, jogging to jazz and a toff with a pet fly. “Becca is completely filterless,” says Saint. “Charlie is probably more sensible, but still a mess,” adds Reynolds. “She’s stuck in a stupid job and not using her potential, so she finds joy in messing around with Becca.”

2 TRASH TALK

“I always wanted to do something about a really intense friendship, because even though I love my friends, I sort of hate them too, because they’re all just dicks,” confesses Popper.

“Women ultimately talk crap like blokes do.” Reynolds agrees. “It depicts really well the ease you can have with someone, where you’re being your shameless self with them all the time. They aren’t brushing each other’s hair and telling each other how beautiful they are; they’re pushing each other in bins and pouring wine over each other’s heads.”

3 TRAINING SPRAY

As with *Friday Night Dinner*, many of the seemingly far-fetched sequences have really happened. “I remember queuing for a bar and there was a bouncer who had a fly on her head,” recalls Popper. “I was thinking, ‘What would happen if I just slapped it?’ And I’m afraid to say that another friend actually shat themselves in front of their personal trainer [*as happens in I Hate You*]. Although in his case, the trainer followed him into the cubicle, apparently in case he had a heart attack.”

‘They aren’t brushing each other’s hair and telling each other how beautiful they are’
ROBERT POPPER

4 RICE TO MEET YOU

“I can usually tell within about 10 seconds if an actor is right,” says Popper. “And we knew more or less straight away with Tanya. But we couldn’t find our Becca – we saw 203 people, then our casting director scraped together another 17. The 13th was Melissa, shovelling Rice Krispies in her mouth, and she was brilliant!” Covid restrictions meant not only that auditions were self-taped, but that the leads had to generate chemistry through a screen. Despite this they clicked instantly and have, they all agree, been inseparable ever since.

5 ROCKING HORSE

The opening credits feature Becca and Charlie dancing, before a curtain parts to reveal a talking horse voiced by Peter Serafinowicz and played by Rusty, a steed in the past for Russell Crowe, Emma Watson and Kristen Stewart. “We were starstruck,” marvels Saint. “He was fine with the music,” adds Reynolds. “But he just didn’t like the sudden movement of the curtains opening so he’d back away. Eventually they had to film him separately. But he totally nailed his lines.” **GABRIEL TATE**

I HATE YOU STARTS ON CHANNEL 4 IN SEPTEMBER.



Tanya Reynolds and Melissa Saint play the lead duo in *I Hate You*.



Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the wardrobe...

EXCLUSIVE

TAKING WING

HATCHING A girl is bound to a grotesque bird creature in a stylish Scandi body horror.

You wouldn't know it watching her twisted feature debut, but Finnish filmmaker Hanna Bergholm couldn't abide horror movies growing up. "I've always been afraid of them, because those imaginary monsters and murderers moved into my wardrobe when I was a child," Bergholm tells *Teasers* over breakfast at Sundance London. She taps into formative fears for *Hatching*, a film in which a wardrobe is the domain of a monster even a mother couldn't love.

Pitched by screenwriter Ilja Rautsi as a single sentence – "a boy hatches a doppelgänger out of an egg" – Bergholm was instantly captivated by the possibilities contained in those nine words, with one crucial exception. "I said immediately that I wanted to change the lead character into a girl," the director recalls. It was a decision that turned the film from a simple creature feature into a tale loaded with resonance.

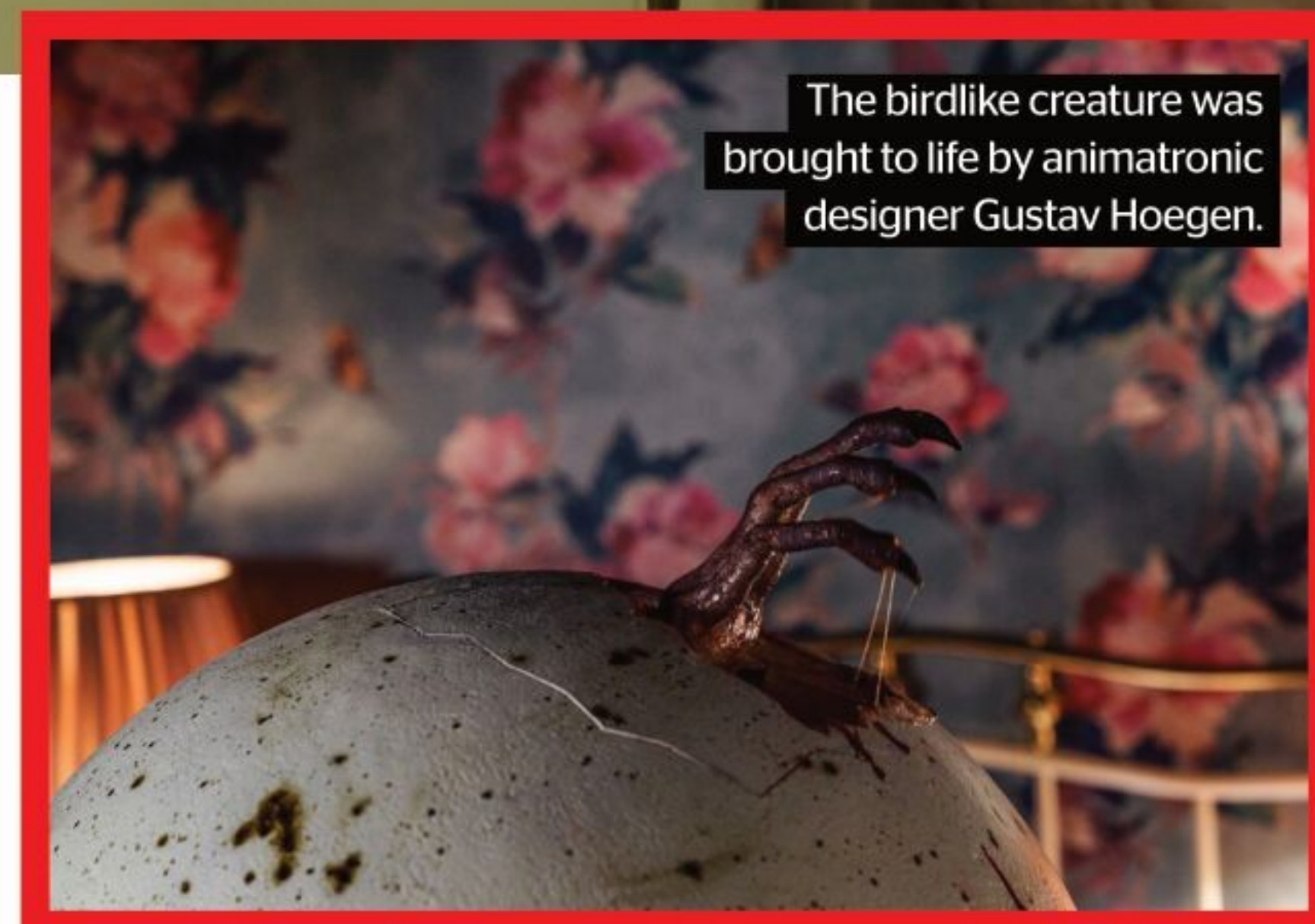
"In the Finnish language, 'hatching' also means brooding," Bergholm points out. "So for me, it means that she's trying to hide some of her emotions and some sides of her character. There's a theme of motherhood and of growing up. So all those themes really came from this one sentence."

Newcomer Siiri Solalinna (one of 1,200 actors who auditioned) stars as

Tinja, a gymnast with an overbearing influencer mother (Sophia Heikkilä) who cares less for her daughter's wellbeing than how many likes she can generate. One day Tinja finds a mysterious egg, which she nurtures until a wretched creature emerges from within, the birdlike beast personifying the rejection and resentment that Tinja feels as an unloved daughter.

"This creature is so disgusting that no one could ever love it," Bergholm smiles, satisfied that the results lived up to her intentions. Pleasingly Alli, as the creature comes to be known, has been brought to the screen practically with best-in-field animatronic puppetry by *Star Wars* veteran Gustav Hoegen, and special effects make-up by Conor O'Sullivan.

"I wanted it to feel real, and to have a physical presence," says Bergholm,



The birdlike creature was brought to life by animatronic designer Gustav Hoegen.

'I wanted it to feel real, and to have a physical presence'
HANNA
BERGHOLM

who was inspired by the "rawness" of David Cronenberg's creature effects, and used pictures of contorted and "anorexically thin" bodies for reference when conceiving the creature's design. "We had five puppeteers, who had 20 years of experience. That was immensely helpful."

With a budget of under £5m, the labour-intensive intricacy of Alli meant only one puppet was ever built. "That was quite scary, because animatronics can break easily. Luckily, I wasn't aware how easily... [Gustav] was just freaking out all the time!" Bergholm chuckles. "There is a scene when the puppet is in the bath, and that was the last thing we shot – after that, it really broke. But we made it to the end." **JORDAN FARLEY**

HATCHING OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 16 SEPTEMBER.

THE HERO

Cinema irreversibly influenced my whole life," says Zhang Yimou, 70, the esteemed filmmaker from China's so-called Fifth Generation, whose work ranges from lush period pieces (*Raise The Red Lantern*, *Shanghai Triad*) to blow-out actioners (*Hero*, *The Great Wall*). Now he's digging back into his early years with *One Second*, about a travelling movie show in rural China circa 1975.

What drew you to making *One Second*?

I started as a cinematographer. When I was young, I studied photography, learning the techniques, using very simple equipment, and I have many memories of developing film. Later I became a film director, and those memories were still vivid. I have always wanted to tell such a story by combining those memories of cinema and celluloid, the material of film, to show people's obsession and longings towards cinema in the time of hardship. *One Second* is the story of my youth. This kind of memory is not only personal but also collective. Cinema has accompanied us growing up and carries our dreams.

After making action-heavy films like *The Great Wall* and *Shadow*, were you keen to make something more personal?

I have been psychologically preparing to make *One Second* for many years. I knew I would eventually make it one day. Even though it's not commercial and may even be ill-timed, I believe it's worth it because it preserves a historical memory.

You've often gone between bigger movies and micro-



ZHANG YIMOU

THE CHINESE DIRECTOR GIVES US MORE THAN A SECOND OF HIS TIME...

budget features. Do you find it rejuvenating to do so?

Making small-scale films are always my favourite because it bears less commercial pressure and I feel more light-hearted as a filmmaker. Therefore, of course, it's more rejuvenating. The only concern is – how many people are willing to see them? As the old Chinese saying goes: 'There is no gain without a loss.' You can't have the best of both worlds.

One of your biggest hits was the martial-arts masterpiece *Hero*, now 20 years old. How do you look back on it?

I had all this money and I wanted

to do a very big Chinese movie. Not only with the actors, but also those behind it – such as the composer. I really wanted to go against Hollywood, something that creates beauty out of Chinese tradition. We had the script almost finished when [Ang Lee's] *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* came on the market, and there was a moment when I thought of giving up the whole project, because I figured everybody would say I was just jumping on the bandwagon. But then I figured I liked the script, and so I did the movie anyhow.

Do you think *Hero* and your other martial arts movie *House Of Flying Daggers* changed Chinese cinema?

Yes... China entered this commercial era. And now it went into another phase – the fast-food production. The cookie-cutter Hollywood method. I used the phrase 'walking with both legs' – meaning you have to somehow find the right balance. Yes, you can make great commercial movies, but at the same time, you have to come to your roots.

You've worked with Hollywood actors like Christian Bale, in *The Flowers Of War*, and Matt Damon, in *The Great Wall*. Did they improve your English?

I worked with so many great English-speaking actors but I never picked up any English! On the other hand, Matt Damon actually picked up a lot of Chinese.

What's next for you?

I am currently making a new film called *Man Jiang Hong*, which is a totally different film from *One Second*. We will finish shooting in August and hopefully get it released next year. This is a very stylised and entertaining film, which I hope people will like!

JAMES MOTTRAM

ONE SECOND IS ON MUBI FROM 16 SEPTEMBER.



The upcoming *One Second* (top); Tian Jing and Matt Damon in *The Great Wall* (middle); Yimou's classic *Hero* (top).

'CINEMA HAS ACCOMPANIED US GROWING UP AND CARRIES OUR DREAMS'



UPPING THE A



Dwayne Johnson's journey to bring the ultimate comic-book badass to the big screen has been a long time coming, and as he and his collaborators tell **Total Film**, **BLACK ADAM** is just the start of a whole new era in the DCEU...

WORDS MATT MAYTUM

ANTIHERO



wayne Johnson is Black Adam' asserts the black-on-white lettering on the cinema marquee at the Warner Bros lot in Burbank, California. While this is fairly standard marketing speak, there is an argument to be made in this case that the star and hero (well, antihero, but we'll get to that) are pretty much indivisible. This DC adaptation has been a passion project for Johnson for years, and his tenacity, commitment, and superhuman bulk have brought it to life, finally.

It's June 2022, and *Total Film* is on the WB lot to catch up with Johnson and the *Black Adam* filmmaking team at the launch of the first trailer. After a double-bill of that teaser on the big screen, *TF* is granted a private audience with the main man. Johnson – who dubs the character #TheManInBlack on social – is appropriately attired today: black knitted polo, black trousers, black shoes (no socks). On his left sleeve, stretched around tree-trunk biceps, are two embroidered lightning bolts, barely visible, black on black. It's a subtle reference to a character who has long lived with him.

"Twenty-plus years, I would say," guesses Johnson when *TF* asks how far back his obsession with the character – that he's long publicly fought to bring to the screen – goes. "I have, from a little boy, just always gravitated towards DC comics and DC superheroes and DC supervillains. I remember growing up, and there was not a superhero in the DC Universe, at least that I was exposed to in Saturday morning cartoons, that looked like me. But I still fell in love with all of them, and I fell in love with the villains even more. And then years later, once I started to expose myself to the deeper layers throughout the DC universe of comics – and this was just about when



Dwayne Johnson in his long-fought-for role of Black Adam, with Aldis Hodge as Hawkman.

I was getting out of college – I was exposed to Black Adam. So it goes to way back then."

The character has lived long in Johnson's imagination, and the idea of portraying him on screen is something that he has been thinking about seriously for about 15 years. He recalls, in 2006 or 2007, having fun in an interview when the discussion moved to superheroes, and Shazam was suggested.

"And I said, 'Oh, I like Shazam, too,'" remembers Johnson. "And then I brought up Black Adam. At that time,

I was in a different point in my career. And I had a little fun with the journalist that day. I said, 'Well, you know, if I ever do, I'll leave it up to the fans. You can go ahead and ask the fans, and say, "Who would you rather see me play, Shazam or Black Adam?"' The hardcore fans came out and made it known. Which was really cool."

Plans have rumbled on for years – DJ was talking in-depth with *TF* about *Black Adam* as far back as our *San Andreas* cover – with the exiled antihero, true to form, taking his sweet time. Johnson's long-term producing

**POWER PLAY
HAWKMAN**

"Carter Hall, back in the day, in one of his original forms as Prince Khufu, he found this alien metal called Nth metal. He realised that he could do many things - glorious things - with this metal. This metal gave him the power of flight. It gave him regenerative powers - fast healing. This metal is what he's used throughout his entire armour, and to create his wonderful, awesome wings. It's what he uses for his awesome weapons, his mace, his shield, everything."

Aldis Hodge


partners Hiram Garcia and Beau Flynn have seen the movie evolve through several iterations, including one in which the origin stories of Black Adam and Shazam would feature in the same movie. That project got to scripting stage, before the call was made to separate it into two movies, giving each character the space to be done justice. The Shazam film made it out of the gate first, in 2019 (with a sequel coming later this year). That film was an infectiously enjoyable body-swap spin on the superhero genre; expect *Black Adam* to be cut from an altogether darker cloth.

'Is he an antihero? To some, he is just a straight-up superhero'

DWAYNE JOHNSON

"I think *Black Adam* is going to be a departure from what people have seen of me onscreen over the decades," says Johnson, sipping from a can of Zoa energy drink. "I wanted to make sure that I brought Black Adam to life, knowing that it was a departure from what I had played before in the past, because there's a lot of elements about Black Adam that are dependent on your perspective. Is he a supervillain? Is he an antihero? To some, he is just a straight-up superhero. There are just natural elements, I think, in me, that are part of my DNA that we see in the character of Black Adam. [But] it is a departure from anything that I've played before in the past. A complete departure."

For Johnson, the character contains elements of superhero, supervillain and antihero. "What makes Black Adam very unique and different is that he lives by a code, too," explains Johnson. "If you attempt to harm his people, his ➤➤



Pierce Brosnan plays the golden-helmeted Doctor Fate.

► family, his country, or him, he will rip you in half. He will literally grab you by the neck, and then grab you by the thigh, and rip your body into two pieces!” Johnson erupts into the gleeful laugh of someone who probably has the upper-body strength to perform such a feat.

“He’s definitely not a villain,” considers producer Garcia, when we talk after our chat with DJ has wrapped. “But he’s willing to do what heroes can’t, and won’t, do to protect the innocent, and to protect his people. And that’s something that we like about him. Because I think for the universe, it makes him a disruptive force. He makes people nervous. Because when you have a character who’s that powerful that they can’t control, and who, in essence, is the one who makes the decisions – it makes all the other heroes a little bit nervous. And that’s fun for us.”

‘He’s willing to do what heroes can’t and won’t do to protect the innocent’

HIRAM GARCIA

In the film’s take on Black Adam’s origins – partly inspired by the version told in DC’s 2011 New 52 comics relaunch – Teth-Adam, to give him his original name, is a slave turned people’s champion in the fictional nation of Kahndaq, and he’s bestowed with powers from the gods. But after following a path of vengeance on behalf of his son – who we learn in the trailers sacrifices himself for his father – Teth-Adam finds himself entombed and isolated for five millennia, before returning, as Black Adam, in the present day.

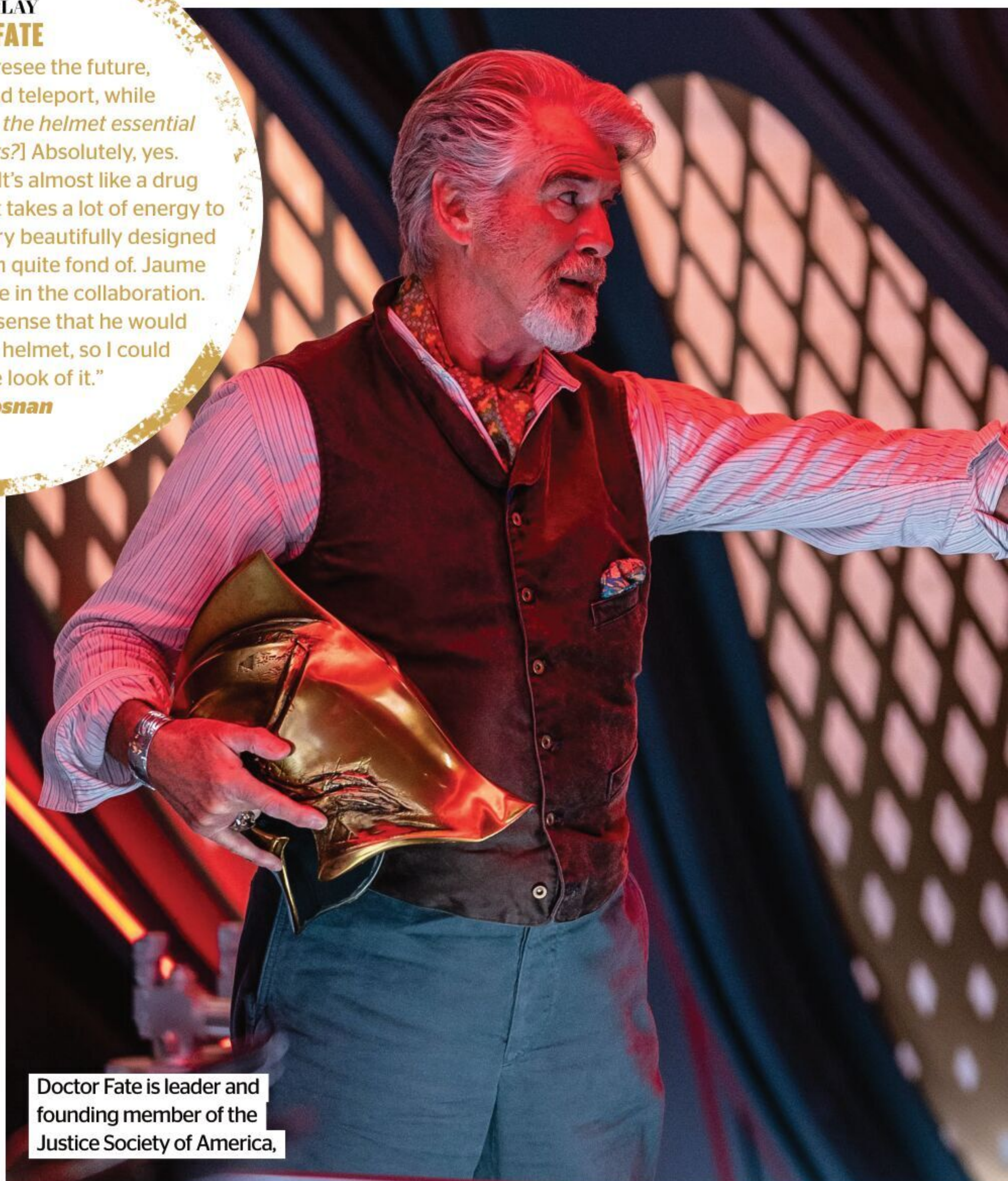


Hawkman has a different perspective on superheroics to Black Adam.

POWER PLAY DOCTOR FATE

“He has powers to foresee the future, and raise the dead, and teleport, while wearing a gold helmet. [Is the helmet essential to unleashing the powers?] Absolutely, yes. It’s a blessing and a curse. It’s almost like a drug addiction in some respects. It takes a lot of energy to wear the helmet. It was a very beautifully designed outfit and helmet, which I’m quite fond of. Jaume Collet-Serra is very inclusive in the collaboration. He was wonderful in the sense that he would send me designs of the helmet, so I could participate in the look of it.”

Pierce Brosnan



Doctor Fate is leader and founding member of the Justice Society of America.

“When Black Adam kind of emerges into our world, he’s a disruptive force,” says director Jaume Collet-Serra, reteaming with Johnson after *Jungle Cruise*. (Talking of disruption, shortly after *TF*’s interview with the filmmaking team begins, Johnson bursts into the room to throw off the group with a cheeky joke.) Collet-Serra compares Black Adam to another cinematic disruptor, Dirty Harry: “a cop that doesn’t follow the system perfectly to do what needs to be done”. But the rearrival of wild card Black Adam demands special attention, and that’s where the Justice Society comes in.

DREAM TEAM

The Justice Society of America are DC’s oldest superteam, predating the Justice League by 20 years with a 1940 debut, though they’re only now coming to the screen. “For someone like the JSA, they need to kind of go talk to him, and be like, ‘What is his deal?’” continues

Collet-Serra. “So it is a bit like in a western, with the law coming to figure out, ‘What is this guy about?’”

That team is led by one of its founding members, Kent Nelson, aka Doctor Fate, played here by Pierce Brosnan. “Like Doctor Fate says [to *Black Adam*], you can be a saviour, or you can be a destroyer,” says producer Flynn. “Those are pretty high stakes.” Doctor Fate sports a shiny alien helmet, and can use magic, as well as having the ability to look into the future.

“I am the elder of the group,” former Bond star Brosnan tells *TF*. “I’m assured he’s one of the oldest characters in the pantheon of comic-book characters. He’s an archaeologist.” While it seems to be Brosnan’s dulcet tones that will lay out the choice facing Black Adam, another legendary comic-book character will be Adam’s moral counterpoint.

Carter Hall – Hawkman, when he’s in superhero mode – is played by Aldis Hodge (*One Night In Miami*, *The*



Even if they may butt heads from time to time, I think they understand each other.”

If Kent Nelson and Carter Hall are the authority figures of this Justice Society, there's young blood too. “In the JSA, you have two rookies, essentially, with Cyclone and Atom Smasher, which is a great sort of viewpoint into that team, alongside two legends like Doctor Fate and Hawkman,” says Collet-Serra. “So there are some really fun dynamics.”

As a result of dubious scientific experimentation, Maxine ‘Cyclone’ Hunkel is imbued with the ability to control the wind. “She’s an incredible character,” says actor Quintessa Swindell. “She’s like next-gen Justice Society...” When we meet her in the film, Hunkel is experiencing her powers on an epic scale for the first time. Swindell could somewhat relate to Hunkel’s position on the team.

“When I was first auditioning for the role, the breakdown was so awesome,” Swindell says. “It just seemed like a character and a superhero film that I hadn’t really seen yet – someone who was really new to the process, and just new to being a superhero. So it was like, I could actively experience what she was experiencing authentically,

and just be like, ‘Oh, shit. I’m very excited. That’s Hawkman, and that’s Doctor Fate, and this is incredible.’”

Rounding out the team is Al Rothstein, also known as Atom Smasher, who has the ability to go super-sized. “When coming into the Justice Society, he’s pretty fresh,” says Noah Centineo, who portrays Rothstein. “So he’s still learning. He’s nervous. He’s still trying to figure out how he fits into that team as well. I think Atom Smasher and Cyclone really fuse together from this newer, inexperienced perspective.” Rothstein’s superpowered lineage also weighs heavily on him. “He really wants to prove himself as one of the good guys.”

The JSA have long been a part of the film, but as Garcia explains, “they really started to come through more” when the Black Adam and Shazam films were separated. “We had an opportunity to really flesh them out in a way that we wanted to.”

“And then once we started to do that, then it became this blast to decide: ‘Which [members] of Justice Society? Who’s going to be in there?’” adds Flynn.

As to where a potential villain fits in with the clash between antihero Black Adam and the Justice Society superteam, the team are keeping ➔

Invisible Man). “This brother has been around for a while,” Hodge explains via Zoom, a Hawkman vinyl figure on the shelf behind him. (A *Star Wars* fan, Hodge also has a Baby Yoda: “Grogu’s my dude.”)

“He has the power – or rather the curse – of reincarnation,” he continues. “So he’s actually been around for thousands of years, even during the time of Teth-Adam, when he was originally in his previous form.”

Hall’s Nth-metal flying suit makes him physically formidable, and morally, his straight arrow is a stark contrast to Adam’s blurred lines; when Hawkman asserts, “Heroes don’t kill people,” Black Adam retorts, “Well, I do.”

“Carter Hall, he’s a natural-born leader, but to a degree, also, a little bit of a tortured human being,” adds Hodge. “So there’s some kinship and some synergy between what he feels, and what he does, and what motivates him, as well as what Teth-Adam does.

POWER PLAY ATOM SMASHER

He can control his molecular structure, and grow to outstanding sizes. He’s very, very powerful. He can actually lift over 100 tonnes. He’s one of those superheroes that has a monstrous power, which is why they choose him. But he’s inexperienced and he’s young. So there’s definitely humour to that. But that’s a superpower: he gets big, he’s strong, and he smashes. He’s Atom Smasher!”

Noah Centineo



Noah Centineo plays the nervous young hero Atom Smasher.

ANTIHERO SCALE

Ranking the good, bad and the good-bad

BAD TO THE BONE



PEACEMAKER

His helmet might look like a toilet seat (sorry, beacon of freedom), but John Cena's "douchey Captain America" won't take any shit when it comes to defending and safeguarding America. And if that means turning on his cohorts, killing Rick Flag and eating a whole beach of dicks, no problemo.



THE PUNISHER

Whether portrayed by Thomas Jane, Ray Stevenson or Jon Bernthal, skull-obsessed vigilante Frank Castle has a zero-tolerance policy on systemic corruption and organised crime. If they had only left his wife and kids alone, however, he might well have found another use for his lethal skills and destructive ingenuity.



LOKI

An out-and-out villain in the original *Thor*, Tom Hiddleston's God of Mischief has become a lot more amenable since and even sacrificed himself heroically in *Avengers: Infinity War*. With all those variants tinkering with the Sacred Timeline, though, you should probably only trust him as far as the Hulk can throw him.



DEADPOOL

After an experimental cancer serum left him looking "like a testicle with teeth", you wouldn't blame Wade Wilson if he turned to the dark side. Yet Ryan Reynolds' "Merc with a Mouth" has somehow managed to stay on the side of the angels, even after losing the love of his life.



(THE) BATMAN

The Dark Knight may have trouble keeping his darker urges in check, as shown by his most recent incarnation's propensity for pummeling street thugs into pulp. But Bruce Wayne will always have Gotham City's best interests at heart, not to mention a loyal Alfred Pennyworth to give him moral guidance. **NS**



GOOD AS GOLD

➤➤ that under wraps for now. "It's going to unfold in the movie," cautions Collet-Serra. "It is, essentially, in a way, what sets everything in motion, and then it's something that the movie tracks. But a lot of the time, the JSA versus Black Adam is the main focus."

HERO MODE

"After being in this business for many years, Black Adam is a once-in-a-career character," says Johnson. "I realise, going in, you've got one shot, and the pressure's on. You've got to dive headfirst into the fire. Because, also, the superhero genre has been busted wide open in the greatest of ways in our business, and has been responsible for some of the greatest movies ever made. So that's the measuring stick [you're judged against]."

While Johnson is one of the rare stars to be in superhero shape year-round, he knew that special attention was required for Black Adam. "I went into this knowing the responsibility,"

Johnson says. "So, in that, I wanted to come in the best shape I've ever been in. When it was about 18 months out, I started my training programme for Black Adam. And it involved two workouts a day, in the Iron Paradise [Johnson's personal gym], but also, at that time, I was also shooting other movies concurrently. Luckily, in those two movies [Jungle Cruise and Red Notice], I was covered up, so I was still able to change my body around, and continue to sharpen my body. I put in a lot of work, man."

All that effort almost went in the bin when Johnson had his first costume fitting, and his outfit was stuffed with padding. "Immediately, what I realised, and what everybody realised, was the moment you pad a costume, you take away all the work I've done, and then it just looks really fucked-up and weird, in that I look how I look, and on top of that, I have all this fake muscle padding," Johnson explains, grinning. "I just looked like I belonged on Saturday

The trailer shows Black Adam's son sacrificing himself - something the antihero is still upset about...



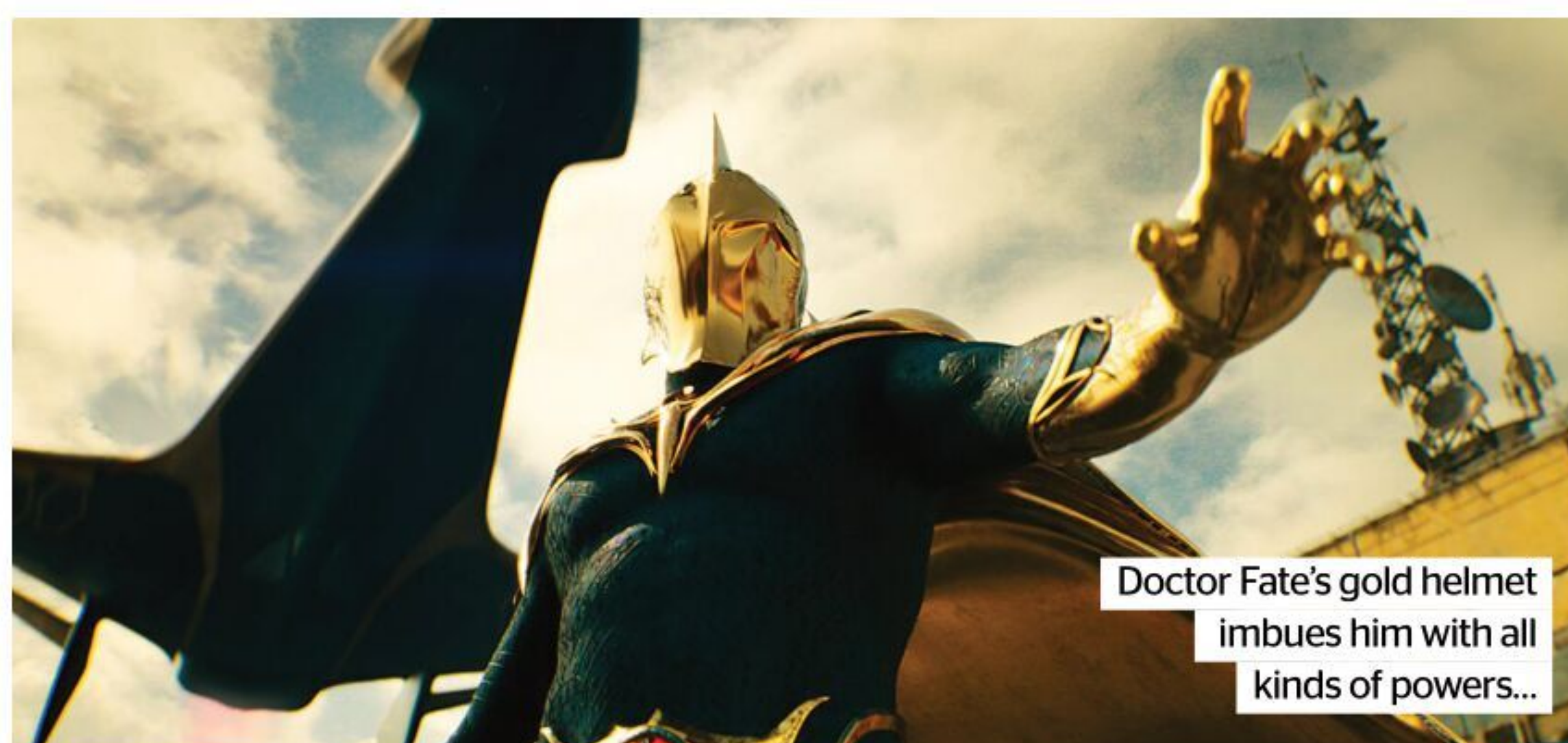
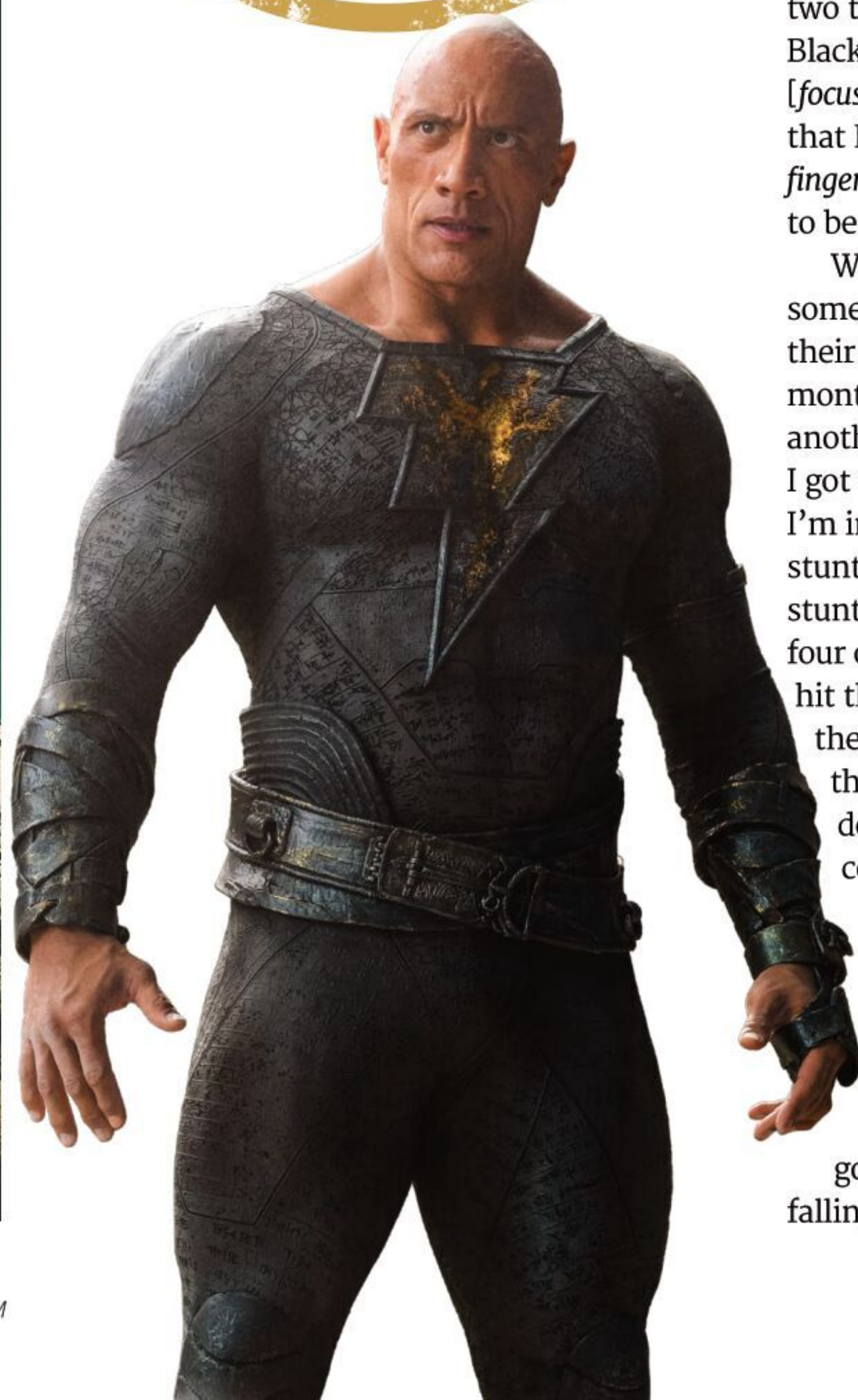


Quintessa Swindell plays the wind-controlling Cyclone.

POWER PLAY CYCLONE

"She has the power to harness and manipulate the wind. Her powers weren't something that she really had within her, it was something that was forced upon her by a scientist, and so she also has this aspect of her where she can control nanobots, and she has that technology as well. [The costume is] like if Vivienne Westwood was a superhero. It's very circus-y and very theatrical and very cool, and kind of punk at the same time."

Quintessa Swindell



Doctor Fate's gold helmet imbues him with all kinds of powers...



Night Live doing a skit on "What Went Wrong With Black Adam's Body?"

The streamlined, multi-layered costume proved valuable for getting DJ into the required headspace. "When I get that final [back] zip up, I always tell [my dresser]: 'Don't give me the arm braces here or the bracelets or the belt. I'll see you on set.' And then that two to three minutes of just me in the Black Adam costume – you are forced to [focus]. So anything going on; anything that I had going on in my day... [snaps fingers]. Immediately, it commands you to be Black Adam."

Working opposite Johnson forced some of the other cast members to up their games. "I went down to set two months early, because I was finishing another job," says Hodge. "As soon as I got done with that, I was like: boom. I'm in Atlanta, working out with the stunt team, because we had an insane stunt team. So we would get up around four or five o'clock in the morning, and hit the gym for a couple of hours. And then around eight o'clock, we'd go hit the stunt-training gym, and we'd do whatever. We would do fight coordination. We would do training on wires. They would lift me 40ft in the air, and drop me! I don't care how manly you are – there's nothing like being 40ft in the air, and they're like, 'So now you're going to come down, and you've got to land cool.' But you're literally falling to the ground."

"I put on some weight," says Centineo. "I was training in the gym. I definitely bulked up in preparation. But I think that those two [Johnson and Hodge] really took the cake – as well as on set, their fighting."

Swindell also went all in on the action obligations. "When I got up on that fucking wire, I swear to God, I was like: 'I'll be in this all day, with no breaks, because we have to get it right,'" they say. "I was so determined."

Having a Rock-sized protagonist required a new approach to action scenes. "One of the things with DJ is that not only does he have the size and the muscles, but he has the knowledge of what looks good, and at what angles," says Collet-Serra.

Mere wires won't cut it for getting Johnson to hover above the ground. Flynn explains that a special "robotic arm" was created for Black Adam's levitating scenes. "It's the first of its kind." And Black Adam has a whole host of abilities to unleash.

"There's a great mix of powers that I think are very, very playful," says Collet-Serra. "You have some powers that are visually, you know, striking – no pun intended. But the lightning of it all is such a visual show of just badass power – raw power. I think that's the one thing that we visually used to kind of create that sense that he's like a weapon. He's like a weapon of mass destruction, literally. Then there is the flying... In particular, ➤➤

➤ he floats a lot. Obviously he's super-strong and super fast. He has the sonic stuff with [his] hands."

It's with those powers and abilities that the most electrifying man in sports entertainment – turned the most electrifying antihero in comic-book movieverse – threatens to disrupt the hierarchy of the DC Extended Universe, something that Johnson has been promising to do for some time.

"Black Adam is the anchor that will drive us with jet fuel out of the gates," he says. "But the goal is to really expand the universe, and introduce new characters, and spin off, and be really strategic about the plan. We have a few ideas of what characters people are really going to respond to in *Black Adam*, and so we're already thinking ahead to: 'Let's start thinking about that movie, and what that movie looks like for them.'" Johnson has never hidden his desire for Black Adam to cross paths with Superman, and he still harbours that ambition (and yes, that goes beyond the Kahndaq champ's appearance in the *DC League Of Super-Pets* end-credits sting).

A NEW ERA?

"I have long been an advocate to have Black Adam and Superman on screen, and just acknowledge each other," says Johnson with a chuckle. "It's one of my goals. And when you break that down, you ultimately realise that he has the powers of Superman. Superman's biggest weakness is magic. With Black Adam, one of his superpowers is magic. And for someone who has that kind of power and intellect and speed, and that can rival Superman – who is widely considered the greatest superhero of all time – and someone who also has a strong code of ethics that he believes in, but then also someone who is actually beloved and is a champion of his people, all of these elements... So that's what I was saying many years ago, and that was part of the pitch meeting with DC. 'You have a character in Black Adam, whether you make this movie or not, who can usher in a new era of antihero in the DC universe. You have somebody who can change the hierarchy of power.'"

"I think our ambition has always been that this is all a shared universe, you know?" says Garcia. "While [*Black Adam and Shazam*] may not be crossing paths, everything exists in a big umbrella of the DC universe. And we want to be able to build out the universe as big as we can, and, you know,



'If the fans want it, if people would like to see more, I would love to do more'

NOAH CENTINEO

with those ambitions. If everything's received the way we hope it will be, we have opportunities to potentially see crossovers in certain points."

"And it's cool that Jaime created a world and a tone inside Black Adam and the JSA that hasn't been seen in the DC universe," adds Flynn. "But at the same, there's an incredible opportunity to intersect them, and be part of the entire universe."

"That's our ambition," confirms Garcia. "That's what we want. We wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't have a million storylines right now in our mind of where we see everything going!"

The Justice Society cast members are also not hesitant when embracing



Hero or antihero? Either way, he's not averse to a bit of destruction.

potential future spin-offs. "I'm hoping to," says Hodge when *TF* asks him about reprising Hawkman. "Absolutely. DJ and his team, they definitely have an eye for expansion, and really giving these characters room to breathe, man. I would love to further explore Hawkman."

"Because of what Hawkman and Carter Hall has been through for so many years, there's so much backstory. And, of course, you're going to have to dig into his star-crossed-lover history with Hawkgirl. And I would love to see what that looks like."

"Jesus Christ. I hope so. Goddamn!" laughs Swindell in response to the same question about Cyclone. "I would

certainly love to," adds Cetineo. "I had so much fun, and this film sets up an opportunity for that. If the fans want it, if people would like to see more, I would love to do more."

Brosnan hints at "tentative discussions" with Flynn about further exploring Doctor Fate, but is hesitant to get his hopes up. "I would be interested in going forward with Doctor Fate," he says. "But it's alright. I've been in this game a long time. You don't hold anything too tightly or too closely."

That attitude's certainly in contrast with Johnson's, whose multi-year journey to the screen with *Black Adam* has only heightened his hopes for the

future. "I am optimistic," he smiles. "Just my nature is optimistic. And especially when it comes to creative. Especially when it comes to movies. And especially when it comes to the pantheon of DC superheroes and supervillains. Across the street, we have the pantheon of superheroes and supervillains of Marvel. To me, they can not only exist, but they should, in my mind, cross paths one day," he laughs again, perhaps at his own boundless optimism. While *that* project might be an extremely long shot, if anyone can do it...

BLACK ADAM OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 21 OCTOBER.

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THE MAID OF MISCHIEF.**

WORDS MATT LOOKER

mas



Quinn

Gotham's infamous Rogues Gallery – that is, the roster of supervillains that Batman has repeatedly fought throughout his career – consists of many wrongdoers with a long, comic-book-storied history, often dating back to the '40s.

However, Harley Quinn is a much more recent creation, with an origin story that doesn't begin in the usual medium. In fact, for one of the most popular comic-book characters currently in existence, her very first appearance didn't happen in a comic book at all, but in an episode of *Batman: The Animated Series*.

In 'Joker's Favor', the 22nd episode of the show, which aired on 11 September 1992, Harley Quinn was devised to be just an interesting female addition to the Joker's crew of many male henchmen. Little did anyone know then that this simple throwaway idea would become something so much bigger. "Her incredible popularity really snuck up on me," explains co-creator Bruce Timm. "I wasn't even aware of it and then over the years I began to gradually realise I was seeing more people dress up as Harley at conventions, and I started seeing a lot more Harley merchandise."

ANIMANIAC

It was writer Paul Dini who first came up with the idea, inspired by his friend, *Days Of Our Lives* actress Arleen Sorkin, who would often adopt a fun, ditzy comedy voice. Of course, when it came to actually casting this brand new character, Sorkin was the obvious choice to bring in for the role and Harley became a character that she would go on to voice across various formats for the next 20 years.

At the time of creating Harley Quinn, Dini also sketched up a quick suggestion for her look, which was inspired by the Batman '66 show and featured go-go boots and a distinctly '60s hairstyle. That original idea was rejected by artist

Bruce Timm, however, who went on to research classic harlequins and then found a challenge in that their costumes were usually extremely detailed with lots of diamond patterns.

"I remember seeing one image of a character that was split down the middle: there was one colour on one side and one colour on the other side and I thought that was kind of cool," he says. "And it reminded me of several different comic-book characters, like the original Daredevil from the 1940s, which had a bit of a red and black split. So I took inspiration from that and used a red, black and white colour scheme, and then I basically just simplified the heck out of it, adding a couple of diamond patterns here and there."

If any of this seems like an unceremonious approach to designing the character, it's because Harley was only ever seen as a one-off creation that wouldn't return to the show. It was when that first episode was in production that the creative team realised they might like to bring her back. Although that presented a problem, because there was the suggestion that the Joker having a "steady girlfriend" of sorts would soften him, and the show had aspirations to explore the darker side of the villain.

As it turned out, though, once Harley and the Joker's relationship became more complex over time, it lent itself to even darker themes. "Every time we brought her back, it was subtle, but we kept adding more shades to her personality," Timm says. "And the more we explored this idea of her being really in this quite one-sided relationship with this guy, it was interesting."

MAD LOVE

It wasn't until DC Comics invited Dini and Timm to write a comic book that Dini suggested exploring an origin story for Harley that had been percolating in his head. *Mad Love*, published in December 1993, gave us the concept: Harley Quinn – original name Harleen Frances Quinzel (inspired again by Arleen Frances Sorkin) – was initially the Joker's



Quinn's relationship with Poison Ivy was an important development for the character.



psychiatrist at Gotham City's Arkham Asylum until he manipulated her into falling in love with him and joining him as an accomplice. The dynamic between the two characters was partially inspired by the relationship between Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence Of The Lambs*, but the notion of Harley being in a controlling, abusive relationship proved to have a significant resonance with many fans.

"Once that door opened, it was like 'OK, that's some pretty dark material,'" Timm says. "It was fairly unusual for children's programming, but I think a lot of people – both men and women – saw that story and could relate to it unfortunately."

From this point, Harley Quinn became more visible across lots of different comic titles, crossing over into videogames and, of course, eventually movies. With many stories exploring her emancipation from the Joker, she became an unlikely representative for female empowerment. Then, as the character was seen to explore a more positive relationship with Poison Ivy, she became a symbol for inclusivity in comic books among the LGBTQ+ community.

"I hear that a lot from women at conventions," says Timm. "They'll either say 'Seeing Harley and Ivy actually become lovers gave me the courage to come out of the closet', or they'll say 'I was in a really bad relationship and I took a page from Harley Quinn and hit the road.' I could never have foreseen that coming, but I think that's why she's become so popular."

As different sides of the character were explored, however, it didn't come without



Harley Quinn's original look in the animated series, voiced by Arleen Sorkin.



WARNER BROS. DC



levels, sometimes even in the same lines,” explains Halpern. “She had to be incredibly angry and then tell a joke and then be sad. Harley has pretty poor emotional regulation and Kaley got that part of the character right away. She also had an understanding of what she thought she could bring to it that would be different than the other people who have voiced or been the character.”

Another important development for the character was her close friendship – and subsequent sexual relationship – with Poison Ivy. This bond between the two had its first seeds sewn in those original *Batman: The Animated Series* episodes, and exploring this further proved to be a key selling point for the new show.

“When we pitched the show originally we said the first season is going to be this two-hander,” says Schumacker. “They’re going to start out as friends and it’s going to be this Ferris Bueller/Cameron Frye relationship: Ivy is always the logical one, pulling Harley back from the ledge when she’s ready to jump into something whole hog and it’s too dangerous, while Harley is constantly throwing caution to the wind. So that really defined the relationship and the look of the show.”

THE EDGE OF GLORY

With *Harley Quinn* returning for its third season this year and ongoing appearances in DC’s monthly comic titles, not to mention all eyes on Robbie’s return as the character, there’s no sign of interest in Quinn waning anytime soon. Then there are those reports that she will appear alongside Joaquin Phoenix’s Joker in the Todd Phillips follow-up, *Joker: Folie À Deux*, played by none other than Lady Gaga in what would be a musical sequel to the first film.

“She’s got her work cut out for her!” Timm says. “Margot is as good a live-action Harley as Christopher Reeve was a live-action Superman. You know, that’s the character come to life. I adore Lady Gaga though. Clearly she loves the flamboyance that comes with the character. I think she could really bring it and be totally great.” Long live the queen of chaos.

controversy as some versions of the character were accused of being oversexualised. Most notably, the 2009 videogame *Batman: Arkham Asylum* introduced an updated character design that faced considerable backlash. “I was aware that the design they came up with for her for that game was kinda gnarly. She had the torn fishnets and super-huge cleavage and stuff. To me it looked kinda tacky,” considers Timm. “But now I look back on it and think it was literally one of the big milestones in her career in terms of her popularity. She skyrocketed when that game came out.”

SQUAD GOALS

The next stage of the Gotham City Siren’s rise to fame came in her transition to the big screen via a universally praised performance by Margot Robbie. Even with her film debut in David Ayers’ critically lambasted *Suicide Squad* (2016), Harley was still regarded as the high point of the film. Since then she has starred in her own spin-off, female ensemble movie *Birds Of Prey* directed by Cathy Yan, and reappeared most recently in James Gunn’s more comically chaotic version of *The Suicide Squad*.

“I don’t know when I’ll ever get sick of playing Harley, she’s such a catalyst of chaos,” Robbie says. “And every time a different director approaches the character, I think they gravitate towards certain aspects of the character that they find intriguing or interesting, and then I get to explore all these different angles of Harley.”

Throughout these three live-action outings, Robbie’s commitment and enthusiasm for the

character is clear. “The most exciting thing for an actor is to have choices with your character, and you can really do anything when you’re playing Harley Quinn,” she says. “With some roles, you can react one or two ways; with Harley, it’s more like 20, and every one of them makes sense for the character. That is really liberating and creatively stimulating.”

The success of these films led to a renewed resurgence of the character, which in turn led to comedy creatives Justin Halpern and Patrick Schumacker being invited to develop a *Harley Quinn* animated show. “Our elevator pitch was: What if Mary Tyler Moore was a psycho killer?” explains Schumacker. “So you had this character that, in our minds, despite all of the darkness surrounding her and her past, and the business she trades in being murder and mayhem, was still the consummate optimist. She has this rose-coloured filter through which she views Gotham City.”

When it came to creating a voice performance that matched that take on the character, *The Big Bang Theory*’s Kaley Cuoco had a specific way to approach the role. “We needed someone who could hit a bunch of different emotional



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The background is a dark, industrial scene. A bright yellow laser line with a small downward-pointing triangle at its left end extends horizontally across the upper portion of the image. Below the laser line, a mechanical arm or drill bit is visible, pointing downwards. The overall atmosphere is gritty and technical.

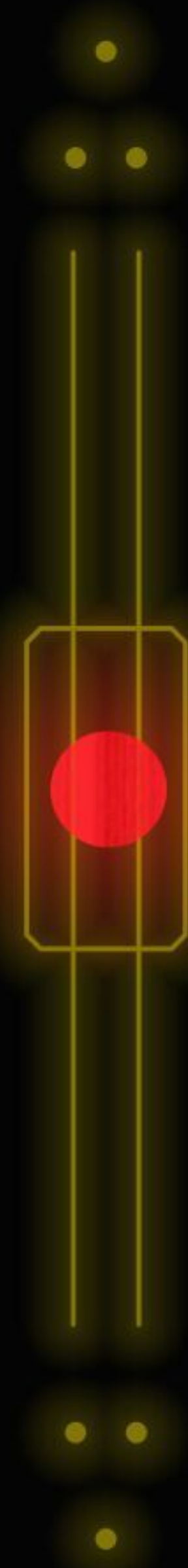
ROGUE WAR



ROGUE ONE WAS THE
END OF CASSIAN
ANDOR'S STORY. NOW
IT'S TIME FOR THE
BEGINNING, THE
MIDDLE AND MUCH
MORE WITH THE
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SAGA LIKE NONE
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WORDS MATTHEW LEYLAND

ANDOR





ogue One: A Star Wars Story gave us answers to several burning questions. Who were the brains behind the OG Death Star? Who were the Rebel spies who stole those secret plans? And how, exactly, did the Empire's 'ultimate weapon' end up with, to quote *Family Guy*, "a pretty big design flaw"?

But Gareth Edwards' 2016 blockbuster also left a few posers dangling in its apocalyptic-slash-hopeful wake. Take the case of Captain Cassian Andor, the Rebel intelligence officer who signs up for the daring databank raid, ultimately paying a hefty price for his heroism. "There's a moment [earlier on] where he says, 'I've been part of this fight since I was six years old,'" recalls *Andor* star and co-executive producer Diego Luna. "And you're like, 'What does that mean? Since you were *what*? Who put you there? What did you witness? Who were you in your early years?' Those aren't questions that get answered in *Rogue One*. So it's great now to have this long format to explore them."

Set five years before the events of *Rogue One*, *Andor*'s first season (of two – more on that later) will dock on Disney+ on 21 September, comprising 12 episodes that cover a 12-month time period. "It's a gigantic project," says Luna. "It's been three, four years since we first started talking about it. It's been a long journey. And when Covid happened, that pushed us to come up with different solutions to keep things going. Obviously, everyone's safety was the first [priority]. But it also became clear that the work we were doing was important to so many people, an escape they needed, you know? We worked hard to make sure we had the series we wanted. Because it wasn't just about making it; it was



Diego Luna's Cassian (centre) encounters many new faces on his journey.

about making it *right*. And it's the best of the best involved."

As a prime example, he cites creator and showrunner Tony Gilroy, a fellow *Rogue One* alumnus whose post-production work on that film earned him a co-screenwriting credit. "I was there as a doctor," he says simply of his involvement in the prequel. "This is different. This is built from scratch." *Rogue One* was rich in spin-off-ready characters, from Imperial defector Bodhi Rook to Team TF fave Bistan (still hoping, Lucasfilm...). What makes Andor so deserving of the solo spotlight? "He's just such a remarkable character, you know?" says a gesticulating Gilroy. "He kills an ally in his first scene [*in Rogue One*]; he seduces, he lies, he changes his mind... and he consciously, open-heartedly gives his life for the galaxy. How does someone become that way? Making his journey as interesting and as difficult as possible was really fascinating for me."

The 'difficult' part involves starting with a hero who's not in an especially heroic state. "He's lost, he's lost," avers Gilroy. "He's empty, he's disappointed, he's desperate... he's turning into that person you don't want to see coming at you down the street." Will it be tricky, then, for audiences to warm to Andor at first? "I hope so!" replies Gilroy. "I know that's an odd thing to say, but I hope that's the case. Yes, he's pretty tough to love in the first couple of episodes. But then it is Diego, so it's a little hard not to sympathise with him... That's what's so great about movie stars!"

Luna is certainly at full beam today. "You talk, I'll eat," he playfully tells TF as our chat begins, tucking hungrily into a tasty-looking breakfast wrap. Yet he does have plenty to say, even while explaining how, in terms of story specifics, he can't say too much. "I can't, I can't, I can't," he smiles, shaking his head (which is topped by a baseball cap rocking a retro Nintendo-controller design). "The

'WE DIDN'T WANT TO DO A SHOW ABOUT "GOOD" PEOPLE AND "BAD" PEOPLE'

DIEGO LUNA

problem is, you've only seen very little [i.e. *the Star Wars Celebration trailer*]... and I tell you, man, the show moves so much. So much!"

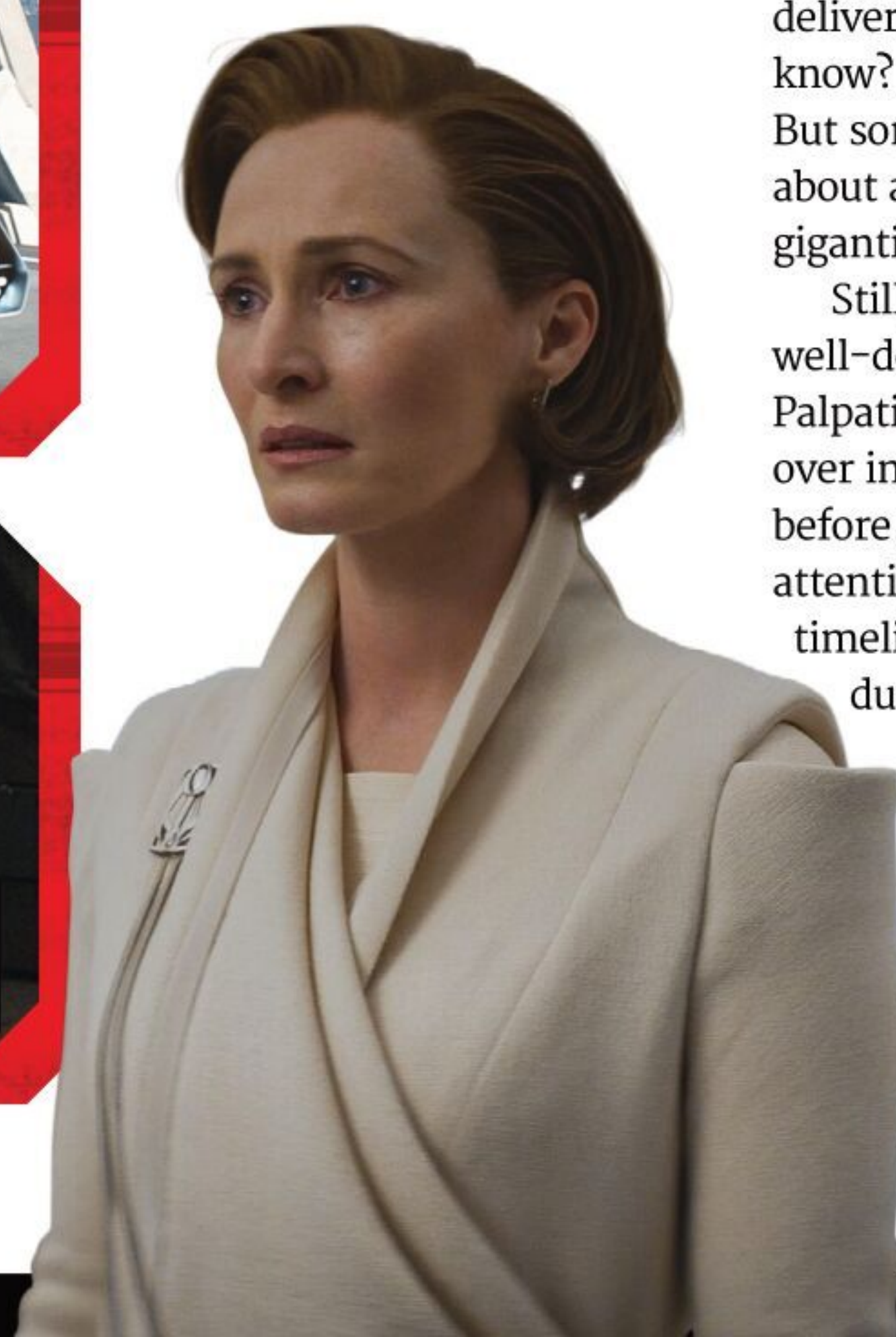
For one thing, he promises "so many different planets you'll get to see for the first time". That suggests *Star Wars* fans shouldn't necessarily expect to see *Andor* end up on Endor and/or Vandor. They can, however, look forward to a return trip to prequel mainstay Coruscant ("It'll run through the whole show," reveals Gilroy): formerly the Republic hub, now Galactic Empire HQ. Another confirmed key location is Ferrix, Cassian's previously unseen home planet. Things we know about this corner of the galaxy: it'll be the site of an action-packed ambush (as per the Lego set, *Ambush On Ferrix*); filming took place on an immense, intricate build in the English village of Little Marlow, near Pinewood Studios (where much of *Andor* was shot); and it'll recur throughout the series, following an extended intro across the opening episodes.

But just when we've got settled, all bets will be off, advises Luna. "You'll watch the first three episodes and go, 'Ah, OK, I get it. It's going to go that way.' And then you'll see the next three and say, 'Holy shit, where did that come from? Who are they? What is that world?'" He credits not only the series' three directors – Toby Haynes (*Black Mirror*), Susanna White (*Parade's End*) and Benjamin Caron (*The Crown*, *Sherlock*) – but also its multiple DoPs with keeping things tonally and visually fluid. "The show has that ability of delivering something new in each episode, you know? It has a spy flavour, a thriller aspect. But sometimes you're in a very intimate story about a person in a room, and then it goes gigantic. It changes and transforms."

Still, given it's set in one of *Star Wars*' more well-documented eras – the reign of Emperor Palpatine – can we expect the story to cross over into familiar territory? Gilroy pauses before answering carefully: "Well, we've paid attention; we know where we are on the [SW] timeline. There are great events that happen during our five-year period that are, you know, canonical." Noting that "some of [those events] have already been dramatised", he goes on to assert that *Andor* will, in some senses, be about the smaller picture: "We're in the back of the house. We're in the kitchen. Our people are the regular people, ➡➡



Luna's Cassian with his adoptive mother Maarva, played by stage/screen icon Fiona Shaw..



MAKING OF

➤ the gravel that the road to revolution is being built on.”

Andor, Gilroy goes on, is essentially about how “revolution comes together”; how the Rebels became an alliance. In that half-decade before *Rogue One*, he explains, “you’ve got all these different revolutionary groups, all these atomised factions, springing up across the galaxy; how are they going to become linked? How do they ultimately end up on [Rebel nerve centre] Yavin IV?” The answer, he teases, will take in “in-fighting, betrayals, risks, paranoia”. Or, as Luna puts it, “We spend a lot of time exploring the grey areas. We didn’t want to do a show about ‘good’ people and ‘bad’ people, you know? It’s about people making decisions to survive and keep moving forward.”

When it comes to character development, *Andor*’s makers intend to max out the opportunities offered by the long format. Luna goes as far as to suggest that the show’s

‘I TELL YOU, MAN, THE SHOW MOVES SO MUCH. SO MUCH!’

DIEGO LUNA

title is almost a misnomer: “You can think you’re going to wake up, have breakfast, have lunch, go for dinner and then sleep with Cassian,” he says, conjuring all sorts of mental images. “But no. There are so many characters. You have to have an ensemble because we’re talking about a revolution.”

Gilroy won’t be drawn on the exact roles played by some of the starrier *Andor* actors, like Fiona Shaw and Stellan Skarsgård. “We have really huge firepower,” is all he’ll say. Thankfully, we can talk about one of the big guns, Genevieve O’Reilly, who’s reprising her role as Mon Mothma, the galactic senator who in time becomes leader of the Rebel Alliance. O’Reilly was previously seen and/or heard in *Rogue One*, *Rebels* and *Revenge Of The Sith*; her screen time here promises to eclipse those outings by some distance as we explore “who she is, what her fights were, what her part in the formation of the Rebellion is”, says the actor. (For more O’Reilly, see boxout page 55.) “[Mothma’s] story is absolutely essential to what we’re doing,” says Gilroy. “I think it’ll be very surprising to people.”

Getting to grips with what our heroes are rebelling against is also a key component, he reveals. “We have a very, very, very deep dive into the Imperial side of the story,” he says. And happily, we’re not talking about another



Cassian plays a key role in the fledgling rebel movement.

Sith sausage party. “I’m *definitely* on the Dark Side,” grins actor Denise Gough, nodding to her brief but fearsome appearance in the *Andor* trailer as Imperial officer Dedra Meero. Excited to be joining *Star Wars*’ growing roster of female baddies, the two-time Olivier winner describes a shot where she dons her Imperial-issue jacket, “and as the camera pulls round, you see it’s a woman in that outfit. And that felt great, great, great.”

Gough’s arc will address gender politics in the age of Palpatine in a timely fashion: “As a woman, in that world, for her to advance in any way, she has to be like 10 times better than anyone else in that room.

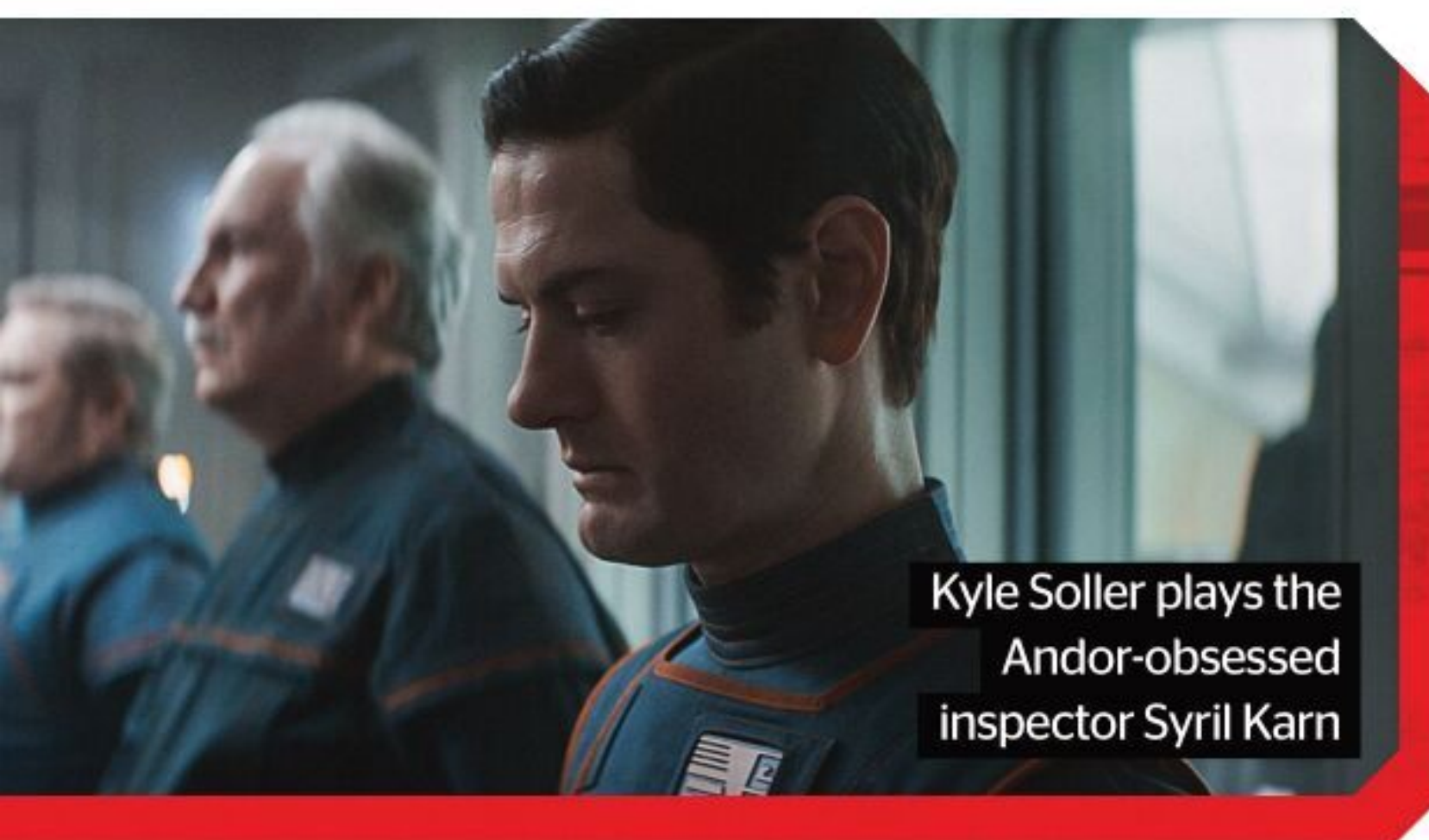
And that felt really relevant to everything we’re going through right now.” As such, she believes viewers will be “on [Dedra’s] side”. To a point, anyway... “It’s a

clever thing to do, to show you how hard she has to work,” reckons Gough. “It kind of brings you in to feel cheerleader-y for her – and then you’ll be like, ‘She’s a psycho!’ So be careful supporting her...”

As to the dynamic between Dedra and Andor, all the spoiler-mindful Gough can say is “she’s not particularly fond of him”. She’s not the only one. Another of *Andor*’s principal foes is Syril Karn, a blue-uniformed inspector on Ferrix who, in the words of actor Kyle Soller, is “obsessed” with Andor. “Syril is a very intense, determined character who believes he’s destined for great things,” says Soller, who appears a lot more chilled than his alter ego. “One of those great things is upholding justice at all costs; another is squashing any signs of dissent or rebellious activity, which obviously relates to our hero.”

An award winner (one Olivier, three Evening Standard gongs) whose screen credits include Joe Wright’s *Anna Karenina*, *Brexit: The Uncivil War* and *Poldark*, Soller paints a psychologically complex profile of his latest character: “I think Syril recognises that Cassian is everything





Kyle Soller plays the Andor-obsessed inspector Syril Karn

he isn't. He also knows there's something special about him, and so he develops this obsession, part of which lies with wanting to transcend his station. He has this shame and fear about his upbringing, which has twisted into anger about anyone who isn't living up to his extreme standards. And he's going to chase them down and make them pay the price..." Soller goes on to describe Gilroy's vision in literary terms. On the one hand, he says, "it's really Dickensian in scope"; on the other, there are scenes "that bring [*the show*] down to this incredibly small, personal domesticity, almost turning it into a Pinter play. It's nothing I've seen in *Star Wars* before." (Gilroy has his own praise for Soller: "He's a freakin' rock star.")

The showrunner (who wrote five of the 12 episodes) hopes that *Andor*'s fresh take on that long-time-ago galaxy will, as he puts it, "open a new lane to a new audience". "We're trying to go all the way in for the really hardcore, passionate *Star Wars* community," he begins. "But we also really want the neighbour or husband or whoever who can't stand *Star Wars* – we want them to come and say, 'Wow, that's the show?!' We want that very, very bad."

The great news for franchise fans and converts alike is that *Andor* Season 2 already has the green light, with production set to kick off in November. Hailed by Gilroy as "the second half of the novel", S2 will again be 12 episodes, but covering a longer time span. "We have four blocks of three [*episodes*] coming up [*for S2*]," he reveals. "And each block will move you one year closer to *Rogue One*. And because it's a year [*each time*], we can do something really fascinating narratively that you would never have the chance to do in a film. It's exciting."

To say Luna is stoked too would be an understatement. His wrap-chewing almost seems to speed up as he looks ahead. "It's a beautiful moment," he states. "We're getting ready. Things are being written and questioned, going back and forth... it's beautiful to live that process from beginning to end, you know?" If S2 fills in the last gaps on the *Andor* timeline, it's surely inevitable that we'll see the return of Cassian's right-hand droid, reprogrammed Imperial unit K-2SO. Won't we? Luna smiles. "Our next season ends where *Rogue One* starts, so I think that answers everything!" The series will marry up with the movie, but also offer some stark, startling contrasts. "It says a lot that his best friend [*in the movie*] is a droid, you know?" muses Luna. "Or his *only* friend, I should say. But in the show we're going to start with someone who is very different from the quiet, lonely man we meet in *Rogue One*. We're so far away from that in this first season; there's a whole journey for us to explore..."

ANDOR S1 STARTS ON DISNEY+ FROM 21 SEPTEMBER.



Q&A

GENEVIEVE O'REILLY

The actor on reprising the Mothma of all roles...

Was it an easy decision to play Mon Mothma again?

I had met Tony Gilroy on *Rogue One*, where he had come in and knitted that piece together. But he was leading on this. And he's someone you jump on board with. He's a deeply passionate, brilliant, charismatic, fiercely intelligent person... very exciting to work with. So it was an easy "Yes, please!"

Where do we find Mon as the show begins?

She's a member of the Galactic Senate, representing her planet Chandrila. Unsurprisingly, she's a minority voice. She's fighting for diplomacy, advocating for people who are easily overlooked in this time of Imperial control. She believes that politics can change things. But we see her not just as a politician but as a woman. It's a lovely place to explore this character who, of course, I've been curious about for a number of years.

Even in her brief appearances, the character has her share of memorable lines... is that the case here?

Yes. Obviously I can't give too much away, but there were certainly some speeches to learn! And I loved that. I loved that in a show where you have can all these explosive fights, there's also time for *words*, and that you can see how they can be both effective and ineffective. But you certainly see that she's a woman who is trying to fight with her voice.

The show looks even grittier than *Rogue One*...

It's definitely true to that world. It's knee-deep in muck and dirt. It's about people struggling against a force that's too great for them. It's about communities fighting to find each other. You also have the political sphere that Mon Mothma is part of, but this show recognises there can be people fighting for the same thing within two worlds that can look very, very different.

Did you revisit any part of *Star Wars* history in preparation for *Andor*?

I went back to the beginning, to Caroline Blakison – a wonderful English actress – and her performance [*as Mon Mothma*] in *Return Of The Jedi*. She does a lot in a short space of time. I think I recognise so much in her speech there. She's sending people out, asking them to sacrifice themselves. And you see within her a pain, a pathos, a weight she's carrying. And I've always been curious about that. Who is that woman? What did she have to do to get to that place? I think we've gone some way to unearthing that... **MATTHEW LEYLAND**



After breaking out in comedy **Booksmart**, Kaitlyn Dever proved her dramatic chops with a run of heartbreaking performances. Now returning to the laughs with **TICKET TO PARADISE**, she tells **Total Film** how she wants her roles to reflect real experiences.

WORDS JANE CROWTHER

PORTRAIT POONEH GHANA

Special K

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lades Of Glory gets it kind of right about the figure-skating world – no joke!” laughs Kaitlyn Dever from her home in LA. She would know. As the daughter of former professional skaters, Tim and Kathy (her dad competed in the 1988 US Figure Skating Championships), Dever has grown up in a house of performers. So it wasn’t such a leap from playing with dolls when, as a kid, she decided she wanted to be an actor. Having cut her teeth performing in adverts as a nipper, Dever convinced her mum to move with her from their Phoenix family home to LA on a trial basis to see if show business would work out. Almost immediately, she got a gig on a movie (*Chrissa Stands Strong*) and never looked back.

Though she’d stacked the CV with jobs on *Last Man Standing*, *Beautiful Boy*, *Detroit* and *Justified*, another movie she’d had her eye on through years of development was the one to put her on the map as an adult, kicking off a run of performances that would wow audiences and awards bodies. As Amy, a nerdy high schooler trying to live her partying life in one night with her bestie Molly (Beanie Feldstein), Dever delighted in Olivia Wilde’s assured 2019 directorial debut, *Booksmart*. She had arrived.

“I had read the script probably three or four years prior to actually shooting the movie,” Dever recalls with a sunny smile from her living room. Wearing no make-up on her freshly scrubbed face, she’s sporting a grey Tennessee t-shirt. “It was always one of those things where I was literally turning down other projects because there was always a moment when we thought *Booksmart* was going to go, and then...” she shrugs. “But I knew that it was going to be special, I always had this deep intuition and feeling about this movie. The biggest thing was that it’s about female friendship, and two girls who had such deep love for one another.”

The film struck a chord with audiences when it debuted at SXSW, made Feldstein and Dever stars, and marked a sea-change in high-school movies made with real kindness. “I think society definitely needed to catch up with that movie,” nods Dever. “When you are having that much fun making something, it doesn’t even really matter, the outcome. I do this because I love it. I’m an actor because it is the most fulfilling thing to me. And being a part of projects like this that are so much fun,

and are a constant reminder of why you wanted to be an actor in the first place.”

Out of the dark

Though she was having “a blast” during the 26-day shoot, Dever was also auditioning for her next project, one that would break her heart to play – and the hearts of those who watched. As Maria, a real-life woman who reported a home-invasion rape and was doubted and dismissed by investigating officers, miniseries *Unbelievable* tapped into a hunger for true-crime drama as well as growing global concerns about victim-blaming, sex-crime support and women’s fragile rights. A far cry from the sunny outlook of Amy,

it changed viewer perceptions of Dever as well as her own ideas about what a role could be. Not just a nourishing experience for herself, but a societal talking point and an instrument to heal for those who might recognise themselves on screen. “I read *Unbelievable* when I was shooting *Booksmart* and went in and auditioned for it. I love acting, but getting to be a part of bringing some sort of social change, or allowing someone to feel seen, and bringing a story like that to life, and shedding light on something that really, really needs to be talked about – that’s a dream come true.”

That gut-punch of a role led to another with Betsy, a coal miner injured at work and



Kaitlyn Dever's Lily alongside onscreen hubby-to-be Gede, played by Maxime Bouttier, in *Ticket To Paradise*.



Dever with rising co-star Beanie Feldstein in *Booksmart*.



Her portrayal of Oxy addict Betsy in *Dopesick* has garnered universal acclaim.

‘I try as best I can to follow my gut and my intuition’

and just so sweet. The two of them together? It’s too much of two people that you just love so much. It’s so fun to be around the two of them because they’re just best buds, and will make each other laugh – and everyone around them. It’s one of those things where you sort of forget you’re shooting a scene.”

Passion projects

A savvy career switch as romcoms see a renaissance after *Marry Me* and *The Lost City*, then? “I think it’s evidence that that is exactly what people are looking for now – we’ve had a really tough past couple of years. So I was really excited about being a part of that kind of experience, because I haven’t before in my career; this was a very different kind of movie that I hadn’t tapped into yet.”

Still, it looks like every move Dever makes is a smart one – with Shakespeare re-tool *Rosaline* coming up, as well as a buzzy sci-fi actioner, *No One Will Save You*, which she claims is the “most challenging” project she’s worked on. Dever will play the title character in *Rosaline*, the girl Romeo was dating before he met Juliet – and who sets about getting her man back. “She is such a fun, exciting character, and it’s a little bit different from your classic Shakespeare story because it’s fully period but [with] modernised dialogue, and it’s hilarious.”

Her meteoric ascent during her perfectly executed career so far looks like a sophisticated game plan to industry watchers, but Dever demurs, pushing her hair back behind her ears and describing herself as “a sponge”, soaking up advice from the creatives she’s worked with over the years. Kathryn Bigelow, her *Detroit* director, gets a particular namecheck for the way she leads a crew with respect, as does Olivia Wilde with her ‘no assholes’ policy.

“What I’ve been so grateful for is that I’ve been able to experience so many different types of TV shows and films. I haven’t really just stuck to one kind of genre. And so I’ve learned so much by just being a part of different kinds of projects. It’s a little stepping stone to the next thing.” But choosing the right projects isn’t always easy or obvious. Dever nods and admits she gets advice from her parents who are “really, really smart people”. But when it comes down to it, she looks herself in the mirror and goes with her instinct. “I strive to make specific decisions and choices in my career, and try as best I can to follow my gut and my intuition. And that is really a hard thing to do because sometimes you never know how a project is going to end up, and if people are going to understand it. Now I’m trying to find that next project that really means a lot to me, and that I have a lot of passion for.” If she continues to follow her gut, glory is surely assured.

TICKET TO PARADISE OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 16 SEPTEMBER. ROSALINE COMES OUT ON DISNEY+ LATER THIS YEAR.



As Romeo's ex in the upcoming *Rosaline*.

afflicted with pain-relief addiction as part of the Oxy crisis in *Dopesick*. The series earned her a Golden Globe nod, has been nominated for 14 Emmys, and also prompted national conversations about opioids.

After a couple of gruelling dramatic years, the 25-year old is now switching it up again with a big-budget, starry romcom, *Ticket To Paradise*. She plays a young woman who falls for a local man in Bali, and her swift decision to marry brings her warring, divorced parents to the tropics to stop the nuptials and perhaps reignite their own spark. Those parents are played by George Clooney and Julia Roberts – and Dever cannot contain her glee in getting

to work with two actors her family watch regularly in a previous collaboration.

“We’re an *Ocean’s Eleven* family!” she squeals. She and her ice-skating parents decamped to Australia’s Hamilton Island (standing in for Bali) for filming, and Dever recalls her disbelief in seeing her onscreen parents meeting her real-life Ma and Pa. “I knew my parents were on set, and they had been watching on the monitor for a few minutes. I couldn’t find them. I was searching for them, and then George and Julia found them, and were just chatting, the four of them. I was like, ‘What’s going on?’” She mimes her head exploding. “Julia is just magnetic. George is just the funniest guy ever,

GENER

JEFF BRIDGES TAKES ON THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF HIS CAREER FOR **THE OLD MAN - THE LANDMARK CAT-AND-MOUSE THRILLER THAT CAME DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO NEVER HAPPENING. TOTAL FILM MEETS THE DUDE AND THE TEAM BEHIND HIS HITMAN SERIES.**

WORDS PAUL BRADSHAW





ATTENTION

MAKING OF

hey don't make 'em like they used to. Serious, smart, old-fashioned thrillers sometimes seem as rare now as serious, smart, old-fashioned movie stars – which makes *The Old Man* feel like dusting off a fine vintage in more ways than one.

Based on the novel by Thomas Perry, the new FX series (streaming on Disney+ in the UK) arrives as a prestige spy thriller about Dan Chase: a 72-year-old ex-spook living out his retirement in hiding after going rogue during the late days of the Cold War. When he unleashes his old skills tackling a home invader, Chase is forced on the run – tracked by his old partner, and tangled up with a new love interest.

Drawing more from '70s thrillers and revisionist westerns than modern actioners, taking a step back was all part of the appeal for showrunners Jonathan E. Steinberg and Robert Levine.

"I thought right away that there was something hiding underneath this story," says Steinberg. "It felt much less about an old action hero, and more about the genre itself. There was a deep humanity to it that started to make me feel a little bit like when I saw *Unforgiven* for the first time. It was really willing to deconstruct all of the mythology of what an American hero is."

Knowing that the whole show hung off casting the right Dan Chase – someone with real movie-star weight who could still pull off the fragility and depth of the role – there was really only ever one choice. "There was a list, and Jeff Bridges was at the top of it. But to be honest I just read right past it!" laughs Steinberg. "I was like, 'Guys, we're not getting Jeff, let's get real.' And then a phone call came in and it all got real very quickly..."

Leaning back in a rustic chair in his Santa Barbara ranch, stacks of half-read books under a mug of tea, glasses perched on his nose as he squints into a Zoom call, Bridges looks about as far from a crack CIA assassin as you can get. And that's sort of the whole point.

"In a way... all stories have to do with love," he smiles, taking a long time to think before answering. "We're all so similar. And we're all so unique at the same time. So for me, it's always the same assignment. You kind of see what aspects of yourself you might want to magnify or which ones you need to kick to the



Gbenga Akinagbe plays Julian Carson, sent to track down Chase.



Jeff Bridges stars as Dan Chase, on the run after decades in hiding.

curb, and then you're like a sponge; you're looking around the world about you seeing who can inform this new guy that you're going to be. When you have that attitude, all kinds of things will spring up."

First handed the book back in 2017, Bridges put it on the pile and never got around to reading it – despite his wife Susan constantly asking him to give it a go. When the script landed on his desk a year later, he gave it another shot and fell head over heels. Joining as a producer as well as a star, he threw himself into his first major TV show (barring a few small early appearances).

"Why now? Well, I guess a couple of things come to mind," he drawls. "Firstly, I'm very hard to drag to the party. I really spend a lot of time resisting what I do. And this one was no exception. You know, I think, 'If I do this, I wouldn't be able to do that...' and I don't even know what *that* is yet. But also, right now, there's so much *content* around. My

father, Lloyd, had seven TV shows. And having experienced how fast everything goes on TV, and how much hard work it is to get any kind of quality, I had those concerns for a long time. But with *The Old Man* I found that it was no different than making a movie. I mean, it was all just exceptional."

Sharing most of his early screentime with a pair of rottweilers, Bridges later joined a small and committed cast including Amy Brenneman, Alia Shawkat and Gbenga Akinagbe. The other biggest part of the puzzle, though, went to John Lithgow – playing the cat to Bridges' mouse.

"In a similar way to Jeff, I hadn't seen John do any of this before," explains Steinberg, deliberately casting Lithgow against type as a counterintelligence officer with his own demons to deal with. "I'd seen him do a million and one other things and be great in all of them, but there was something about this role that just felt different, and that just felt right. And as it turns out, he's also the nicest man I've ever met."

DISNEY/FX, KURT ISWARIENKO



John Lithgow is Chase's ex-partner Harold Harper, working with Alia Shawkat as Angela Adams.

'THE IDEA THAT I COULD TAKE MY TIME WAS PRETTY ATTRACTIVE'

JON WATTS



Chase is still formidable in his later years. Amy Brenneman plays Zoe (below).

"Oh, we had fun, man," says Bridges with a smile. "We have this beautiful scene in a car. And it was a long scene. It was 12 minutes long. And John and I would often do two takes at a time, so we were in this scene for almost a half hour. And we just had a ball. We both approach acting in a similar way I think. We both come from acting families so we had a lot to talk about. When you relax like that, when the story's told through you, it just feels effortless."

For everyone else, watching the two men work was the real joy of making *The Old Man*. Not least for director Jon Watts, who shot the show's first two episodes after finishing *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, staying on as executive producer. "I liked the simplicity of the story, and I liked the idea of getting back to my thriller roots," says Watts. "But the idea that I could take my time was also pretty attractive to me. The Marvel process is very dynamic. You're changing action sequences, and you're improvising on set. But I don't think we changed a word of this. Just to be able to focus on the directing and the performance, and not be thinking about it as this larger, fast-paced, piece of cinematic

entertainment, that was a nice change. Nobody at Marvel wants a 12-minute dialogue scene..."

Luckily, Steinberg did. Deliberately slowing down the pace of the show to give it space to breathe, Steinberg wanted *The Old Man* to follow Chase at a speed that felt right for the character. "This is a real experience for a real human being, and it needed to have that sense of reality to it," he explains. "The pilot is hyper simple. It's really only six scenes, with a little bit of connective tissue. When you slow things down and take away a lot of the tools and tricks you use to cover things, it's not easy. You're cooking with very basic ingredients. But I started to love that very quickly. Here's three or four people, and we're just going to spend a minute with them. That's where the story wants to live."

When *The Old Man* does feel like running though, it really moves. Punctuated by a handful of brutal action scenes, the show deals with fights, shootouts and car chases in the same way it handles dialogue – giving them space and time to feel as realistic as possible.

"We're telling the story of this 72-year-old man and watching him slowly walk down the stairs in the morning and go to the doctor, so I didn't want it to suddenly turn into a fast-paced action movie," says Watts, who directs some of the best set-pieces of his career with the fewest of cuts. "I wanted to create this feeling

like you're actually watching a 72-year-old man in the midst of a brutal life or death fight. But it was really hard. And it takes a lot of planning. Mainly because you are *genuinely* dealing with a 72-year-old man..."

Rocking back in his armchair again, Bridges takes it all in his stride – reminiscing about the time his Dad first taught him and his brother, Beau, how to stage fight as a kid. "I've played people that were more ruthless, but not this violent," he says. "But we

were fortunate enough to have some really great stunt coordinators, guys who'd worked on *Atomic Blonde* and *John Wick*. *Atomic Blonde*... Have you seen that? I mean, it's incredible. The violence is just such a realistic ballet. So I knew I was in good hands after that."

"I love that the fight scenes are telling their own story," adds Akinagbe, who spent time training with a former Navy SEAL for his own role as the man hired to hunt down Chase. "My goodness, I could just watch Jeff Bridges all day and forget I was in the scene with him. But those action scenes really have their own narrative. Even if you took all the audio out and just watched them visually, you'll get a story. It's just amazing."

Watts has slightly less happy memories of the action scenes ("It was freezing, we were rolling around in the dirt in the middle of nowhere. And it was really, really windy..."), but everyone was hit with a far bigger and scarier challenge just a few months into the shoot.

"We went down in the pandemic when everyone else did in March of 2020," says Steinberg. "But days before we were getting ready to go back, when the crew was up and running, when everything was built, Jeff got his lymphoma diagnosis. And then, about three months after that, he got Covid. I mean, there were definitely a number of days where you woke up at three in the morning and wondered if anybody's ever going to see the half a show you made. But then you stop caring about the show and just hope he's going to be OK."

"His attitude through it all though was something I don't think I'll ever forget. As difficult as it was, he just embraced it as just a part of a journey he didn't expect, like it was something to learn from. And then there was a day in January where he came back to work, and it was like he never left."

Speaking openly about the idea of "surrendering" during the most difficult few years of his life, Bridges looks back on his struggle now like it's a different and distant part of him. "All of that illness, all of those two years, feels like a dream," he says, with another giant smile. "Literally, like a dream. When we all came back after those two years of being apart it was like we had a long weekend or something. But those years were just very... surreal."

Coming back to set for his first scene with Lithgow (the same 12-minute car scene he remembers as his favourite), everyone on *The Old Man* was grateful just to have Bridges back. "That first day back I just became a fan again, watching those two guys work, watching them figure out how to talk to each other," says Steinberg. "It was like going to school y'know? You just shut up and sit in the back of the room and watch it, and hope you remember half of what you're taking in."

THE OLD MAN WILL PREMIERE ON DISNEY+ ON 28 SEPTEMBER.

BATTIL

Gina Prince-Bythewood follows up *The Old Guard* by assembling some of the world's greatest Black actresses, led by Viola Davis and Lashana Lynch, as the mighty 19th-century African army, the Agojie. Total Film talks to the director and stars of ***The Woman King*** about creating a new kind of historical action epic.

WORDS LEILA LATIF

ROYAL





Viola Davis leads a stellar cast as General Nanisca.

ina Prince-Bythewood is a stickler for details, stopping her interview with *Total Film* to grab a book in order to accurately relay a quote from Ghanaian revolutionary Kwame Nkrumah that spoke to her experience. She's found it: "I am not African because I was born in Africa, but because Africa was born in me."

Prince-Bythewood may be from California, but both her identity and her latest film are firmly rooted in the African continent. *The Woman King* is set in 19th-century Benin and follows General Nanisca (Viola Davis), leader of an elite all-female unit of warriors – the Agojie – who protect the Kingdom of Dahomey. In telling a story that so distinctly belongs to an African group of women, Prince-Bythewood immediately knew the production had to travel across the Atlantic. "I didn't want this to be a greenscreen film," she says. "But it wasn't just for the aesthetics – we

wanted our feet and hands in the soil to tell the stories. This is an epic film with big crowds, and I wanted it to be us."

Much of the African diaspora, even generations after their ancestors left its shores, still feel pulled back to the continent, and that was certainly the case for Viola Davis. "I first went to Africa when I was 25, a student at Juilliard," she explains. "[I went to] the Gambia because I was trying to find myself, to redefine myself. Not as an artist, but as a Black woman. It was almost like I was screaming inside: 'I know I'm more than what you're telling me I am!'" Davis has now travelled extensively across Africa, including to South Africa to make *The Woman King*, and each time feels that same release. "Every single day it was as if I had meditated for five hours. I had absolutely no anxiety. I had no problem sleeping. It's the feeling of just being."

Prince-Bythewood's first footsteps on the continent were no less impactful. "My honeymoon was to Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, and we often spoke about how we wished that every African-American could take that journey," she says. "It's profound to not be a minority for the first time."

While both Prince-Bythewood and Davis are African-American, the cast and crew's origins

cover huge ground. Part of the film's ethos was to use as many local South African people and resources as possible, but Prince-Bythewood also looked beyond that, recruiting actors like Lashana Lynch, Sheila Atim, Thuso Mbedu, John Boyega and Masali Baduza. "It was really important to me that we were all represented in telling the story," she explains. "I wanted to pull from all over our diaspora and bring our cultures and our specificities, and tell the story of our ancestors."

For Thuso Mbedu, fresh off a wave of critical acclaim for *The Underground Railroad*, playing new Agojie recruit Nawi meant a return home to South Africa. She smiles. "I was actually so happy to be able to go back so early in my career. I got a chance to see my family – with Covid, it had been over a year – and it was a triumph to return, not just as a South African, but as an international actor."

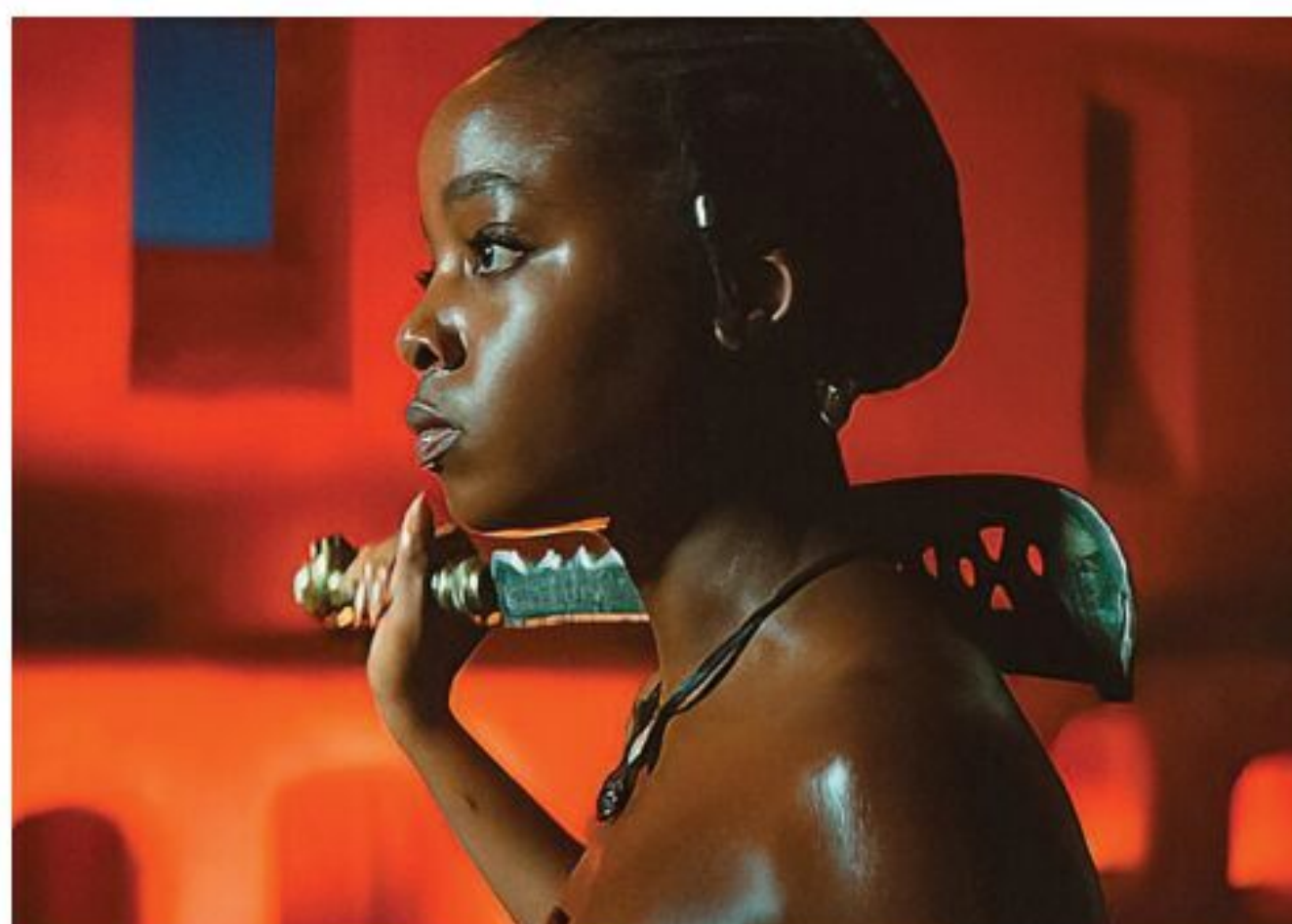
Mbedu, who has Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho heritage, grew up in the eastern part of South Africa. A victim of a colonised curriculum, she first learned of these women in the audition process, saying, "That was my first time hearing about the Kingdom of Dahomey, and the Agojie. Our education is based on an English curriculum, so we had a little South African history and nothing about the rest of the continent."

Producer Cathy Schulman (*Crash*, *Horns*) came to the project with a determination to bring the accomplishments of the Agojie to the largest audience possible. It's part of a philosophy that's shaped her career. "Most of my work has been centered on race, class and gender – it's what I care about," she says. "The project began because Maria Bello went on a trip to Benin in 2016, and told me the story of the Agojie and the Dahomey government, where men and women ran it together. We talked a lot about what a forgotten piece of history this likely was, worldwide, and how incredible it would be as a major motion picture."

Once Davis and her production company Juvee Productions were on board, Prince-Bythewood soon followed. The director was a perfect fit, not only having received critical acclaim throughout her career, for dramas like *Love & Basketball* and *The Secret Life Of Bees*, but having proven her action chops with *The Old Guard*. "I said it to Cathy," she remembers. "I said, 'All my work up to this point has led me to be able to tell this story in the right way.' I'm bringing everything I've learned from all those different films and genres into this. All my work has been reframing what it means to be female – [spotlighting] the innate warrior within all women."

THE GOOD FIGHT

The Woman King faces the pressure of introducing the Kingdom of Dahomey to the vast majority of its audience, and much like Mel Gibson introduced the world to William Wallace and Stanley Kubrick shaped the public perception of Spartacus, there's the knowledge that a film version of events endures, for better or for worse. The balance between historical accuracy and good storytelling is hard to get right. "I think *Braveheart* is certainly a good template," Prince-Bythewood reflects. "It's one of my favourite films. [The Woman King] is absolutely steeped in historical accuracy, and we have created a story within that truth."



Davis on set with director Gina Prince-Bythewood.



Capturing "that truth" is something that was crucial to the whole team, a point that Prince-Bythewood is keen to emphasise. "The amount of research we did was incredibly extensive, as it should be, and it scrutinised the sources. There's a great deal of information from a Western perspective, and from those whose intention was to dehumanise these women. We had great advisors from Benin who helped us get to the truth."

Prince-Bythewood took that authenticity to heart and, even though she had promised herself a break after *The Old Guard*, found herself taking on a huge project with a massive amount of prep. "One of our early decisions was to change the original script where characters were 'Amazons', as they are in the West. Their actual name was 'Agojie'. We're reclaiming their name and that was really exciting for the government of Benin."

Beyond authenticity, it was key for Schulman to challenge certain stereotypes or assumptions that might already be out there. "There's a perception that this West African army would be ragtag, and it was quite the opposite. It was enormously well organised, as represented by their costumes and their ranks, medals and bracelets. We wanted to show just how sophisticated this civilisation

**'ALL THE BEAUTY YOU SEE,
YOU COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN
ANYWHERE ELSE'**

VIOLA DAVIS

was, and remains." And for those who might hear about an elite all-female fighting squad and immediately thinking of the Dora Milaje in *Wakanda*, there is indeed a strong parallel. But as Schulman puts it, "*Black Panther* was a fantasy version of this, which I loved, but it was an exercise in imagining a great African nation with agency. And we don't have to imagine it. We can talk about ones that actually existed."

What also existed, across many accounts, was the fighting skills of the Agojie, something the entire team threw themselves into honouring. "Our stunt and fight coordinator Danny Hernandez was one of my first calls," says Prince-Bythewood. "These are women who fought men in close-combat fighting. So how do we recreate a style of fighting that they had so that an audience believes that truth? What Danny created is really special and believable. It also took the actors accepting that demand full-heartedly. They were going to do it because the best action is always when it's the actor giving a performance within the fights."

Despite the cast being made up of red-hot Hollywood actors, the only one with experience in performing these sorts of stunts was Lashana Lynch, having already made a Bond film along with two MCU entries. For the ➡



The Agojie was an elite squad of warriors made up entirely of women.



VIOLA DAVIS

The Oscar-winner on Africa, action and being an anomaly...

You actually made this in Africa, how did that shape your experience?

We got to shoot on Zulu land and in places that could not have been recreated on a soundstage. All the beauty you see, you couldn't have gotten anywhere else. The red dirt, the beautiful, clear skies, and the mountains. It's as if we were all growing from the soil.

Promoting this film as a Black woman, do you feel burdened with representation beyond what your typical white male star would have?

Yes, I feel that burden with every single thing that I do, even this interview. But that's where we are. Does it bother me? Absolutely. We've always been an anomaly, we've always been sort of this metaphorical shadow, defined by the majority in our country. So any time we're seen as human beings it's a progressive, almost revolutionary idea. I always say, sometimes the novel is very simplistic and sometimes the novel is just seeing me as a general with a machete in my hand.

Have you always had that desire to become an action star?

I don't see myself as an action star. I don't see Nanisca as being an action hero. I see her as being a woman who is the general of an all-female unit, the Agojie. I think "action star" limits the scope. She is a fully realised human being who kills people who threaten the Kingdom of the Dahomey. But yes, I always wanted to see myself in films like *Gladiator* and *Braveheart*, the ones that separate themselves from the pack, and I would put this movie right alongside them.

On this set, were you reassured you are on the right path, being with this amazing generation of actors coming up behind you?

Absolutely, and they are awesome. I always compare life to a relay race and the goal is to run your leg and pass the baton on to the next great runner. And man, oh man, I found the greatest sprinters in this movie. I absolutely believe that our ceilings are their floors. I really do.

LEILA LATIF



rest, Prince-Bythewood had to rely on her gut as to which actors would be up for the challenge. “It was conversations with each one and me looking them in the eye and asking, ‘Are you going to do everything you need to do to embody this role?’ And seeing in their eyes that promise. I’m also an athlete so I can tell when there’s a spark and a desire to be great.” Challenge aside, when it came to the imposing Sheila Atim, there were practical considerations too. “She’s so incredible,” laughs Prince-Bythewood. “But we were not going to be able to double for her at all because she’s so distinct. She has to do everything herself.”

The petite Mbedu is, in many respects, an unlikely actor to be cast as a killing machine. And despite having endured so much as Cora in *The Underground Railroad*, that hadn’t translated to physical stamina. “Your girl was not fit at all!” laughs Mbedu. “I had zero technique, zero strength. I enjoyed the choreography more than anything, but you need the physical strength training to be able to execute it.” Rather than ignore Mbedu’s stature, the film chose to design a fighting technique that matched up with it. “Gina made it clear that there’s not a world in which we could believe that Nawi can punch and take down an Oyo soldier twice her size. So we had to build around speed so she whizzes around doing maximum damage.”

The actors formed a sense of solidarity through their gruelling training, and Mbedu felt that bond reflected the journey her character Nawi goes on. “She fears being unwanted more than death, her journey is to find a space where she is wanted and to be in this sisterhood.”

INTO THE LIGHT

Some of the details of the Agojie fighting style proved an absolute filmmaking gift to Prince-Bythewood. Not only did they grow their fingernails as weapons, but they also “used palm oil on their skin before fights and battles so their opponents couldn’t grab hold of them”. In the film, it gives the actors an incredible iridescent glow, with even the faintest moonlight making them shimmer.

The director’s reputation precedes her when it comes to lighting and framing Black women. Actors like Gugu Mbatha-Raw in *Beyond The Lights*, Sanaa Lathan in *Love & Basketball* and Queen Latifah in *The Secret Life Of*

Lashana Lynch (centre) has gone from the MCU to *Bond*, and now to the elite fighters of the Agojie.



Bees all appeared radiant, with shots composed around them with the loving attention of an oil painting. But Prince-Bythewood wanted to surpass even her own high standards.

“I told our DoP Polly Morgan, these women have to look incredible. I wanted to shoot them better than anyone had shot these women before.” But the care that she brings is not standard across the industry. “Right before we

‘ALL MY WORK UP TO THIS POINT HAS LED ME TO BE ABLE TO TELL THIS STORY’

GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD

started shooting, a very large film had a Black woman as one of its leads and she was shot so poorly it was shocking. And it’s not difficult, you just have to have the desire to get it right.”

Poor lighting aside, there have been a terrible number of examples of women of colour being mistreated on film sets, everything from outright abuse to plentiful examples of indelicacy. Prince-Bythewood wanted to guarantee her set would be considerate to her actors’ needs. “It started with the hair and make-up team, they were

gonna be Black and know Black hair.” She says. “All our teams had great department heads, many pulled from South Africa, and I wanted them to feel they had control and autonomy.”

Even a seasoned producer like Schulman couldn’t believe what she was seeing. “I’ve never experienced hard work like it. There was no bullshit, no fighting, no toxicity, and nothing can’t be done. When all the junk and positioning and politics goes away, suddenly there’s so much room for great work.” That lack of toxic masculine bravado extended outside of gender constraints, with John Boyega, playing the young King Ghezo, living up to being Schulman’s dream casting. “We all hoped it’d be John Boyega, and he said, ‘I want do this and support my sisters.’ I was so impressed! I can’t even remember the last time a male actor wanted to support anyone, let alone his sisters.”

As both star and producer, Davis had more on her shoulders than the rest of the sisterhood, but felt a kinship with General Nanisca. “I want people to see her. She’s calling out from the past and she’s saying I existed and she’s trying to tell you her story. I think that the most beautiful thing that you can feel with Nanisca is connection, and not with her sword and her muscles, but a connection to her heart, her vulnerability, her trauma and what she lived for.”

Just being seen harks back to that feeling that both Davis and Prince-Bythewood felt when they first stepped off the plane onto African soil, and in making this film they are reclaiming that power. “I want the world to see us in a way they haven’t before,” Prince-Bythewood nods. “I want us to see ourselves as we haven’t been seen before. It’s three words: enlightened, inspired, empowered. That’s how I want the audience to leave this film.”

THE WOMAN KING OPENS IN CINEMAS ACROSS UK AND IRELAND ON 4 OCTOBER.



Davis alongside John Boyega, who plays King Ghezo.



LESLEY MY LIFE IN PICTURES MANVILLE

An award-winning actor across theatre, TV and film, Brighton-born Lesley Manville is attracting Oscar buzz for her performance as a cleaner with a shining, shimmering dream in **MRS. HARRIS GOES TO PARIS**. She steers Total Film through the highlights of a decades-spanning career that includes Phantom Thread, Mum and eight films with Mike Leigh.

WORDS MATT MAYTUM

PORTRAIT RACHELL SMITH



MRS. HARRIS GOES TO PARIS 2022

Manville's widowed cleaner Ada Harris covets a couture Dior dress in 1950s London...

You need to believe we're in '50s London, you need to believe in Ada's little flat, her clothes, and the people that she works for. But the story is quite fantastical. I think that adds to the charm of the whole thing. And she manages to get this dream dress – it's slightly fairytale-ish.

Because of *Phantom Thread*, I came to this knowing quite a lot about '50s couture fashion, but the 'wow' moment for me was all of those photographs from the '50s of the models wearing the Dior gowns, especially that look that was called 'The New Look'. And to suddenly be sitting there, playing Ada Harris, and to see that Jenny Bevan, the costume designer, had replicated those very costumes that I'd seen the real pictures and photographs of... It was a bit of a moment.

I've always loved clothes. As a teenager, I was a bit bohemian in my look. I grew up in Brighton. I loved Stevie Nicks, and I loved Laura Ashley. I just loved all those floaty things. And I coveted certain shoes, and saved up to get them.

But I can't compare my life to Ada's. I've not faced the snobbery that she does. It's more typical of that time, perhaps, when it was more unusual for people to break out of their social mould. Whereas now, people do that all the time. We have politicians that went to secondary modern schools. So, no – even though I had a working-class upbringing, I never felt any of those things that she goes through.



LET HIM GO 2020

Grieving sheriff Kevin Costner and his wife Diane Lane seek their grandson... and find Manville's crime matriarch.

The director, Thomas Bezucha, wanted me to play that part. But boy oh boy, did he have a battle with the producers... I can see where they were coming from. Any number of brilliant American actresses you could get to play that, and he wanted this Brit to come to Calgary, in Canada, and play this evil North Dakota momma with an axe and a gun.

When I got there... I might be projecting this, but I think Kevin Costner thought, 'Really? We've got this shy, rather small...' At the end of it, he was so generous. We became real good pals.

I went for it. I remember reading afterwards: 'Lesley Manville chews up the furniture.' Come on! Of course I'm chewing up the furniture. This is a woman who's got her boys, and they have people killed. And these two people have come into the kitchen, and they want to take her grandson away. She's not going to have any of it, and we end up chopping some fingers off. You can't do that with fine brushstrokes. She's a broad brushstroke kind of gal.





PHANTOM THREAD 2017

In a role cut to fit, Manville excels as Cyril, steely sister of Daniel Day-Lewis' '50s fashionista Reynolds Woodcock.

I knew I was going to play Cyril for seven or eight months before we started. And Paul [Thomas Anderson] and Daniel [Day-Lewis] came over to London, and we had a really lovely few days together.

And then Paul leaves you alone. The script is very sparse. I don't think there's any stage directions. It says 'The kitchen' but doesn't say, 'She bangs her hand on the table.' So I spent those seven months researching the time. I learned an awful lot about high-end couture, and the running of a couture house in the '50s. We had wonderful help from the women who ran the archive at the V&A.

But Paul leaves you alone, which I like. I like it when my characters sit with me, and cook with me for a while. Because all sorts of stuff happens subconsciously without you really working at it, and I don't like over-analysing things with somebody else, even if it's the director. I like that to be quite private.

So day one on *Phantom Thread*, Paul just leaves you to it. I thought, 'Is he ever going to say anything?' I'd latched on to this thing with Cyril that it was going to be quite steely, quite still. I just needed it all going on in my head and in my eyes, and hoped that people would get it. Well, the brilliance of Paul Thomas Anderson is that once you start doing it, and he sees what you're doing, then he's on fire. And then it becomes this real, fantastic collaboration. Boom – you're off!

I love the fact that he thinks, 'I've cast the actor I want. Let me let them do their thing.' And he does that. Some people might think, 'That's a bit hands-off, isn't it?' But it isn't. He's got faith in the person he's cast.

FILMOGRAPHY

MUM 2016-19

Manville's Cathy sets about rebuilding her life after the death of her husband in this nuanced, observational sitcom.

Mum is one of the most touching, moving pieces... I don't even know how you'd categorise [it]. People like saying "dramedy", but I don't know.

Stefan Golaszewski is a brilliant, observational writer, and Richard Laxton was a great director. Amazing casting. What a show. You can't believe some of the things some of the characters are saying and doing, and then the next minute, Peter Mullan is making you weep. He was really nervous about playing someone that lovely. He literally said, "I don't really know how to play somebody who isn't going to poke your eyes out in a minute."

I knew from the beginning it was a very different type of sitcom. Even though some of the characters in *Mum* are quite large, Richard always directed them with great finesse. A large character can still be delicate.

And all those little moments Cathy was eventually having of longing, and wanting Michael, and all the shots where you see that Michael loves her... There's a fantastic moment, early on, where she says, "Do you want to stay and have a takeaway or something?" And he says, "Yeah, yeah, I'll stay, I'll stay." She's just rooting around in the cupboard, looking for the menu. And they shoot Peter just watching her. It makes me cry, almost, thinking of it. You just watch this man watching this woman who he loves, looking for the takeaway menu. That shot alone tells you everything you need to know.

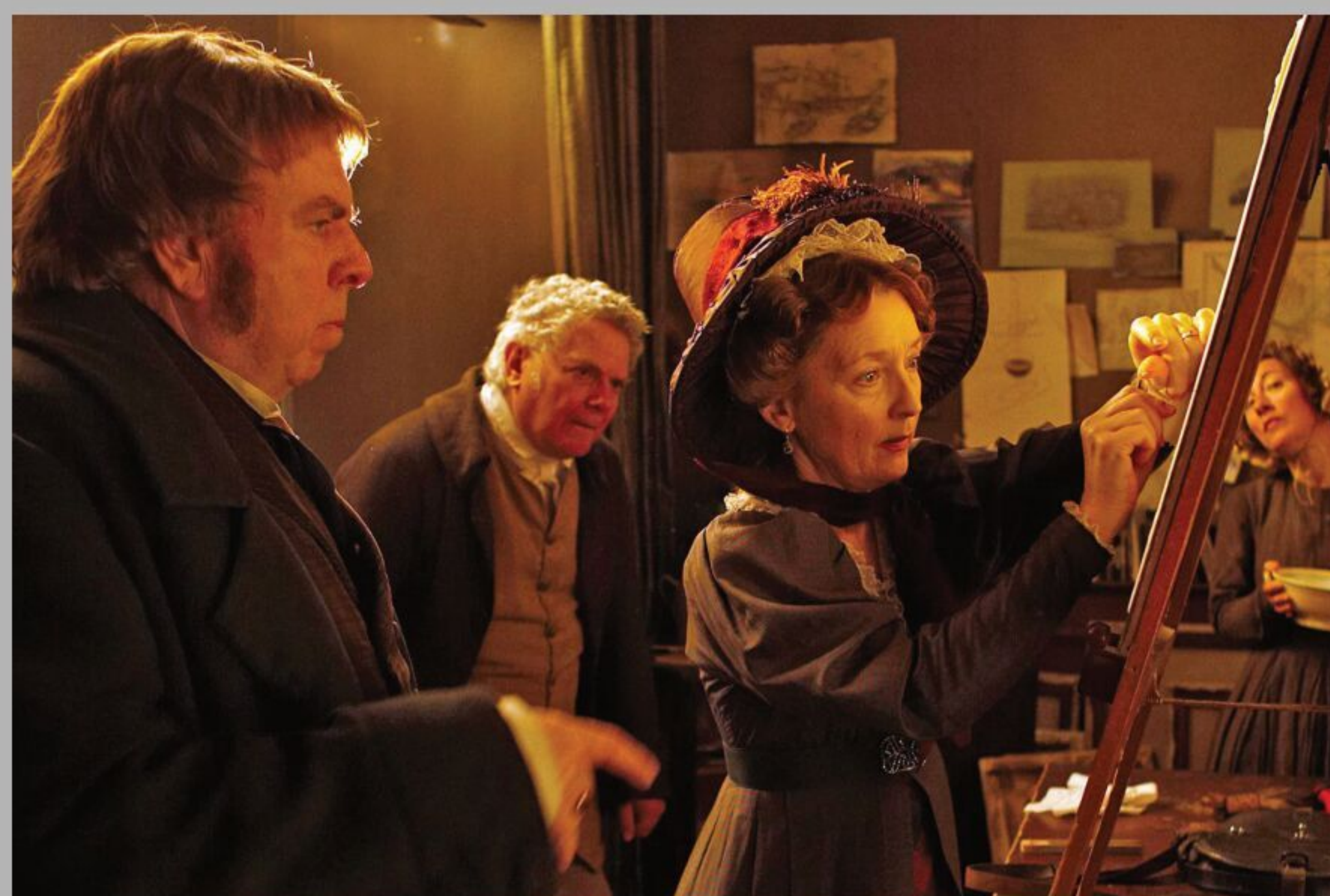


MALEFICENT 2014

Manville flies high opposite Angie's antagonist in this sideways squint at Sleeping Beauty.

It was so different doing the first *Maleficent* to the second one. The first one, you were literally in wetsuits with the camera all over you, and spots all over your face, and helmets on with little antennae cameras. And we were flying around like Cirque du Soleil people, with a harness. We had intensive Pilates training to get our core strength so we could do it. Fit as fiddles, we were.

But by the time we did *Maleficent 2*, motion-capture had moved on so much, I swear to God this is what we did: we had no make-up; our hair scraped back; a grey t-shirt. We shot in front of an arc of hundreds of cameras; we just had to say the lines, and make the facial expressions, but not move our heads. The first one was fun – me and Imelda Staunton, flying around Pinewood. I don't really enjoy [making] that [kind of movie]. I always feel for actors when they say, "Oh, I've just spent 20 months in front of a greenscreen." I think, 'God, no. Kill me now.'



MR. TURNER²⁰¹⁴

Teaming with Mike Leigh for an eighth time, Manville paints a portrait of Scottish scientist Mary Somerville...

Mike [Leigh] had cast [the film], and he was about to do his big meet and greet on day one. The day before the meet and greet, he rang me up, and he said, "Are you free for about a month?" I said, "Yeah, I could be." He said, "I'm doing this film about [English Romantic painter J. M. W.] Turner, and I really think there should be an important, historic woman in it, because it's a very male world, the artist's world." The women in the story were more domestic figures – Turner's wife, and his housekeeper. He said, "I need a woman who was, in that time, brilliant. I'm thinking of having Mary Somerville." Because it's true that Mary Somerville and Turner were friends. It's documented. So I said, "Great. So I've got a month to become a world-leading scientist."

He actually gave me *Physics For Idiots*. *Science For Idiots*. You've seen those books on the shelves at WHSmith? He literally gave me those. Great!

ANOTHER YEAR²⁰¹⁰

Manville's Mary brings loneliness and longing to Leigh's contemplative study of Jim Broadbent and Ruth Sheen's married couple.

I loved playing Mary. I felt her pain. And a lot of people said they knew people like Mary, or felt there had been points in their lives where they'd been a bit like Mary. There's something about Mary – that was not intended, it just came out that way! – that makes me feel very warm and loving towards her.

Mike, the first thing he does with his actors is he talks to you extensively about people you know. They might be people you know very well, or someone you clocked on the train that morning. For *Another Year*, my list was about 100 people. You talk about them all, and he whittles it down. And what normally happens is that you then create Character X. You don't know they're going to be called Mary. She was a bit of a hybrid of quite a few people that I knew. It's like making a cocktail – you put in all these ingredients from these people that you've chosen to base her on. It feels odd at first, because you think, 'Oh, that bit of her is her; that bit of her is that person.' But very quickly, it merges, and it becomes this other person that eventually we call Mary.



ALAMY, BBC, MOMENTUM, EONE, DISNEY, UNIVERSAL



GROWN-UPS¹⁹⁸⁰

Manville's first outing for Mike Leigh sees her newly married to Phil Davis and battling a mean next-door neighbour...

I met Mike Leigh in my twenties. I'd been acting for six years or so, since I was 16, but I didn't know what kind of actress I was, or what kind of actress I wanted to be. I just did any job that came along, and I never thought of playing anybody that wasn't just Lesley Manville.

And then I met Mike. To say it was a lightbulb moment would be an underestimation. He literally made me see that I could play people that weren't like me at all. And I loved not having a script. I loved that feeling of creating a character from scratch, from their birth, to the point where you're going to be portraying them. It made sense to me. Mike and I are very similar. We're both very thorough. We want every box ticked.

People used to think Mike would just roll the camera and see what happens. And nothing could be further from the truth. What Mike does with his actors is what a scriptwriter would do on their own at home. It does take months and months and months.

MRS. HARRIS GOES TO PARIS OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 30 SEPTEMBER.



Sound & Vision

*Half a decade in the making, and drawing from five million pieces of archival material, experiential David Bowie documentary **Moonage Daydream** is about to transform music movies forever. Director Brett Morgen tells Total Film about his filmmaking odyssey, and how Bowie saved his life.*

WORDS
JORDAN FARLEY

On 5 January 2017, days shy of the first anniversary of David Bowie's death, director Brett Morgen had a heart attack that caused him to flatline for three minutes, and put him in a coma for a week. "I had a heart attack because my life had no balance," Morgen tells *Total Film* at Cannes, where his latest labour of love is about to premiere out of competition. "I had been obsessed with work for as far back as I could remember. It was out of control."

Thankfully, Morgen made a full recovery, but the filmmaker and father of three knew that drastic lifestyle changes were urgently needed. "So I'm going through my own recovery of learning how to live and make sense of ➤➤



Morgen wanted to create an 'experiential' Bowie movie.



what happened,” recounts Morgen who, at the time of his heart attack, was in the middle of researching the film that would become *Moonage Daydream*. “As this is happening, I’m absorbing all of David’s interviews, and all of his musings, and all of his grounded philosophies and wisdom. I realised that, through David, I could create a road map for how to live a satisfying and fulfilling life. He taught me how to live in the most profound way.”

Needless to say, David Bowie means a lot to Brett Morgen, as he does to millions of adoring fans accumulated over a 50-year career. Since Bowie’s untimely death from liver cancer in January 2016, there have been no shortage of filmmakers seeking to understand and package an easily digestible slice of Bowie’s life on screen. From trad documentaries (2017’s *David Bowie: The Last Five Years*) to unauthorised biopics (2020’s *Stardust*), nothing has quite done Bowie or his peerless artistic legacy justice, in part because filmmakers have tried to box a shapeshifting musical pioneer into conventional filmic formats.

Morgen always knew this approach wouldn’t work for Bowie. A freshly minted filmmaking hotshot following the release of his breakthrough Robert Evans doc *The Kid Stays In The Picture*, he met with Bowie and his business manager Bill Zyslat in 2007 to discuss collaborating on a “hybrid non-fiction film”. By that point, unbeknownst to Morgen and the wider world, Bowie had already performed in public for the final time months prior. “They came back, and they said, ‘David really loved this pitch but he’s not in a place where he can do this right now,’” Morgen recalls.

Rebel rebel

Over subsequent years, Morgen would go on to make two acclaimed music documentaries – 2012’s *Crossfire Hurricane*, about the Rolling Stones, and 2015’s *Cobain: Montage Of Heck*. At the same time, the director was

developing what he calls the “IMAX Music Experience”, a proposed series of 15 “non-biographical, and purely experiential” two-hour films, each about a different musical artist, and designed to be watched (and, more importantly, heard) in head-popping IMAX-*o*-vision. Upon Bowie’s death, Morgen reached out to Zyslat, suggesting Bowie as the perfect candidate for the Music Experience treatment, but was met with a counter-proposal.

“Bill said, ‘David collected material for his archives for the last 20 or 30 years. He’s saved everything. But he never wanted to do a trad documentary,’” Morgen explains. “And then I show up, and I want to do something totally experiential. No talking heads, no history, no biography. And Bill was like, ‘I think this was all meant to be.’”

Handed the keys to the Bowie estate’s extensive archives of over five million assets, including drawings, recordings, films and journals, the only guideline provided was “to make it my own”, the director claims. “That was an amazing gift of confidence.” From the outset Morgen knew that, as with *Crossfire Hurricane* and *Montage Of Heck*, his Bowie project needed to reflect the unique qualities of its subject, which in this case meant a film “not about David Jones” the man, but ‘Bowie’, the constantly evolving performer.

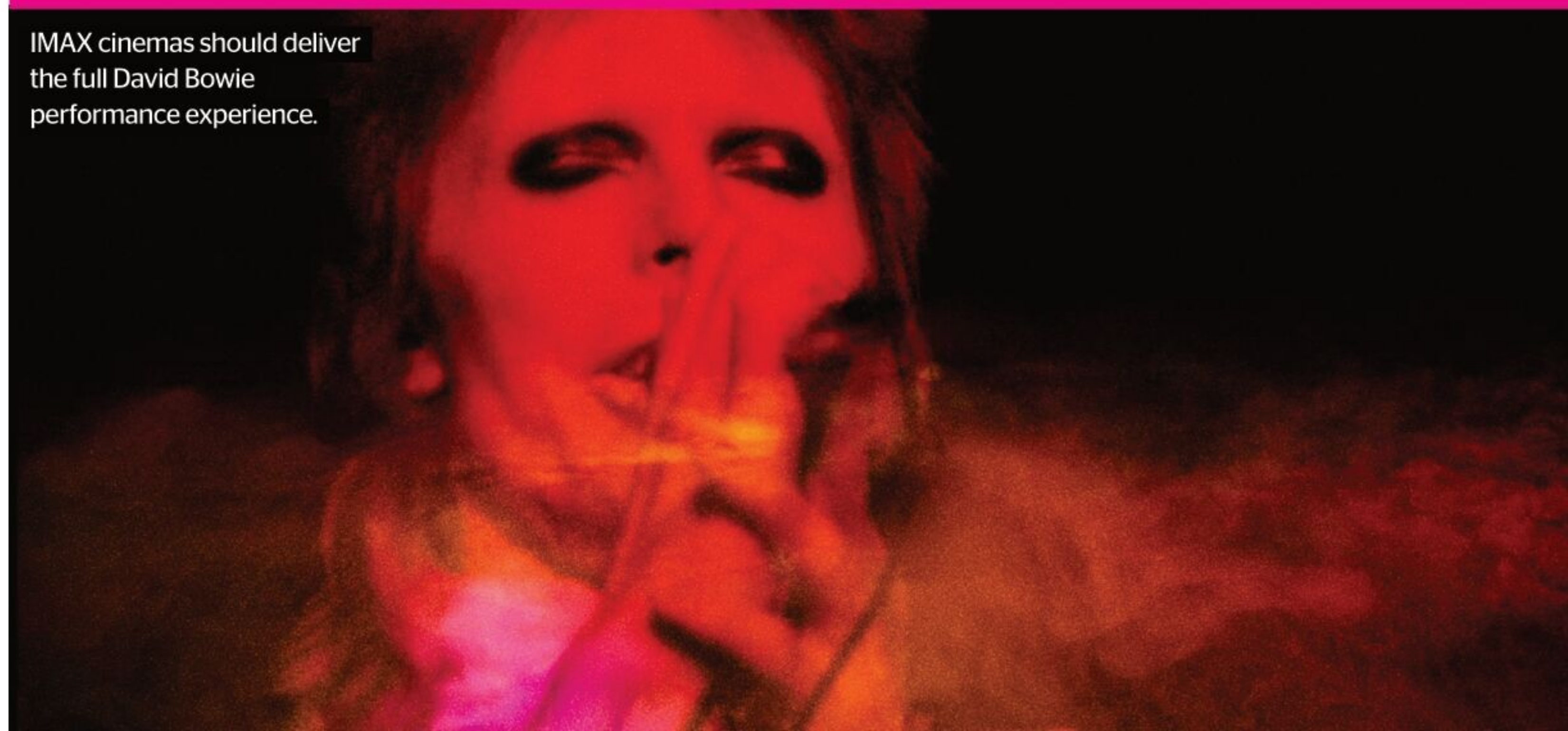
“We could talk about his breakup with his manager, or his album going to the top of the charts, or going to the studio with Queen – but it doesn’t get you closer to understanding David,” Morgen says. “Bowie’s songs are intentionally designed to allow the listener to project their own meanings on to them. He had a process where he’s just playing with sounds and consonants and vowels. It should be gibberish but it isn’t, because we create meaning. That’s the beauty of Bowie. And that’s what the film needed to be.”

With a north star, Morgen embarked on his own process, one that had served him well across numerous movies. “Usually, when I do these films, I like to absorb all the influences from the subjects,” Morgen says. There was

‘Through David, I could create a road map for how to live a satisfying and fulfilling life’

BRETT MORGEN

IMAX cinemas should deliver the full David Bowie performance experience.





The film aims to explore Bowie the performer, not Jones the man.

only one problem: “Where do you start with Bowie? He’s so well-read. It’s overwhelming to tune into all those frequencies. I did not think I was up to the task, to be honest.”

As he sat down to soak up “every available book on the subject”, a small team of archivists and assistant editors started collating the treasure trove of archive material chronologically, for Morgen to later wade through. Estimated to take approximately four months, the tsunami of material eventually took *two years* to organise. “Well, my memory’s not so great. So by the time I got to the end, I could barely remember what I’d screened two years earlier, let alone be ready because we’re cutting it on Monday,” the director admits. “It was torture.”

Though Morgen knew where to start and end his non-linear story, and that he wanted to build the film around themes central to Bowie – transience and chaos – he still had no idea what the minute-to-minute structure of the film was going to be. “So one morning, I woke up, and I decided to hop on a plane from LA to Albuquerque, take a taxi to the train station, and ride the rails until I figured out what the narrative was,” Morgen says. “That was Bowie – get out of your environment where you’re comfortable, put yourself in a difficult situation, and listen.”

Morgen remembers it clearly: it was in the dining car where an epiphany struck. “I said, ‘I’m going to go through each album, and pick three songs from each album that relate back to themes of chaos and transience, and then I’m going to see what that looks like.’ I ended up with a three-hour playlist. I played it while I looked at the scenery going by, and that was the movie. I did very little adjusting. It covered the whole career, and had a nice balance of hits and more obscure tracks. It just felt like everything landed.”

Rock ‘n’ roll with me

Music couldn’t be more central to *Moonage Daydream*. The film opens with uninterrupted concert footage: Bowie bathed in red, performing ‘The Wild Eyed Boy From Freecloud’ during Ziggy Stardust’s final appearance at the Hammersmith Odeon in 1973. As far as Morgen is concerned, Bowie “created the soundtrack for the 21st century”, but unless you were one of those screaming fans in 1973, it’s a soundtrack you’ve never heard like this. Going back to the original stems, Bowie’s long-time music producer Tony Visconti, and sound mixer Paul Massey, took music heard by most only in mono or stereo, and translated it into a rich surround mix, custom-designed for everything from IMAX 12.0 (Morgen’s preferred presentation) and Dolby Atmos, to humble 5.1.

“When I was screening *Montage Of Heck* around the world, in the bigger auditoriums it felt like you were at a Nirvana show at times,” notes Morgen, who wrestled with the debate around preserving the integrity of music designed for stereo. It was a challenge complicated further by the fact that almost no two cinemas are exactly alike. “I’d spend most of the time mixing the film with my back to the screen to try to create an equilibrium in the room. I knew my mind would be tricked if I looked at the screen. It was a real tug of war to figure out how to spread everything out. But that was the reason

why I wanted to make the film. It was like hearing Bowie for the first time.”

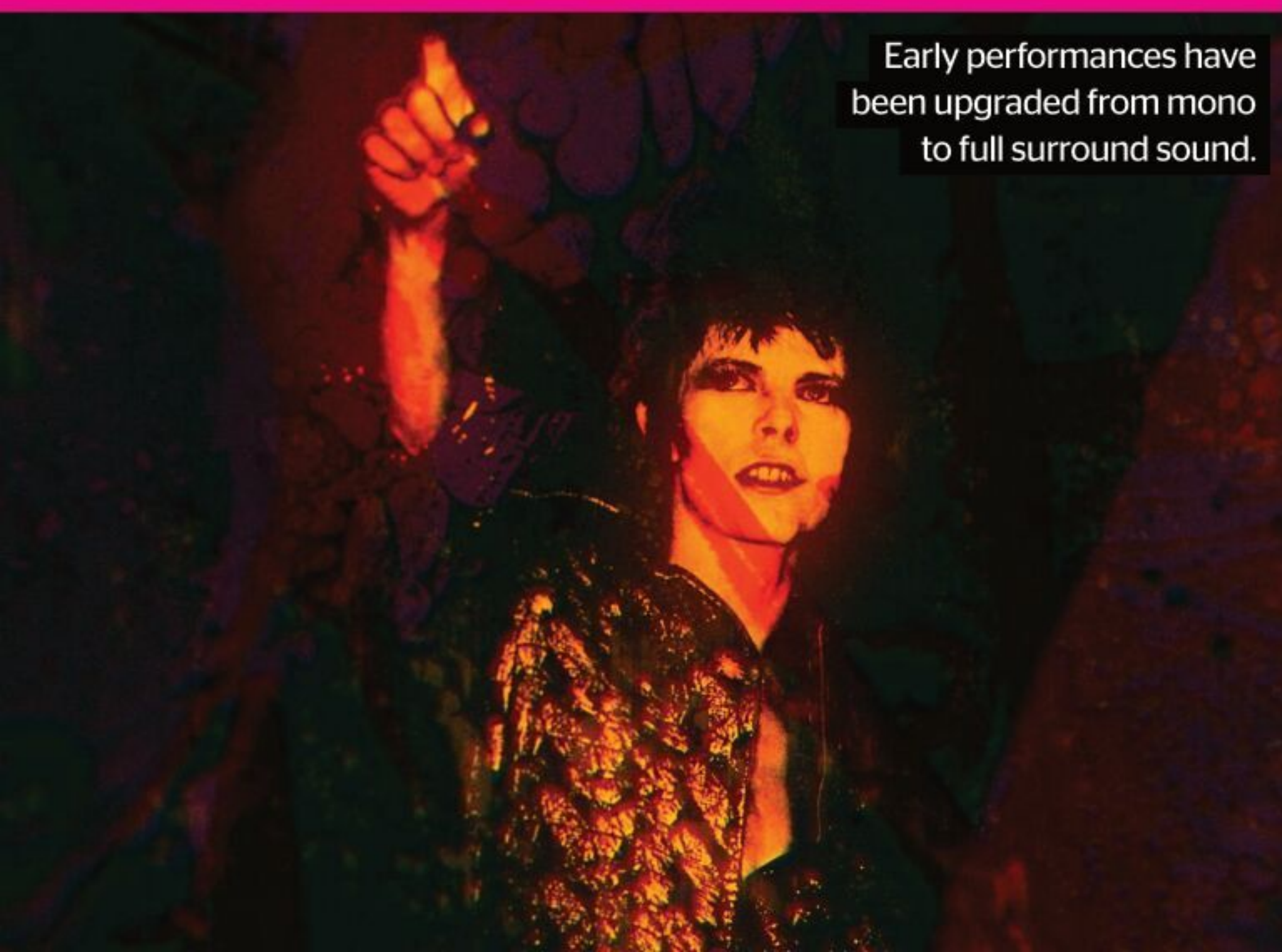
For Bowie, sound and vision went hand-in-hand, and *Moonage Daydream* features a kaleidoscopic tapestry of imagery. Alongside all the archival footage you might expect – Bowie on stage, candid and previously unseen footage of Bowie at work and rest, illuminating talk-show appearances – Morgen mixes in impressionistic animations, art that influenced Bowie (*Metropolis*, Brecht, German Expressionism) and footage from his film and stage performances. The result, you might imagine, looks a bit like the inside of Bowie’s brain.

“There’s no distinction in my mind between him acting in a movie, or him performing on stage – it’s all performance,” Morgen says. “And once you accept that it’s all performance, then *The Man Who Fell To Earth* becomes the greatest documentary of David Bowie. So that was how I was going to play with those images. I was going to complement those images with his art, and the art that he was inspired by, so that the visual vocabulary of the film was a musing of his influences, his inspirations, and his own creations.”

One of the hardest tasks was coming up with a title. After all, what brief sequence of words could encapsulate an artist with the influence of David Bowie? “This film was called *Station To Station* for the longest time. It really is a proper summation of what the film is – no beginning or end, backwards or forwards,” Morgen says. “But I got an email from a friend who wrote ‘moon age day dream’. Each of those words is interesting. And it’s unexplainable. What is a moonage daydream? I don’t know. But this film feels like a moonage daydream to me.” Give yourself over, and you’ll be a daydream believer too.

MOONAGE DAYDREAM OPENS IN IMAX CINEMAS ON 16 SEPTEMBER AND IN ALL UK CINEMAS FROM 23 SEPTEMBER.

Early performances have been upgraded from mono to full surround sound.



INTERVIEW JAMIE GRAHAM

‘THE BIG, CINEMATIC
EXPERIENCE –
THERE’S NOTHING
LIKE IT’

MICHAEL MANN

American auteur Michael Mann is back with *Heat 2*, a sequel to his 1995 masterpiece. It’s a novel. That he plans to turn into an epic movie. Total Film talks to Mann about reinhabiting the explosive world of Vincent Hanna and Neil McCauley, and a stellar 45-year career that takes in *Manhunter*, *The Last Of The Mohicans*, *The Insider* and *Collateral*.

PORTRAITS JOE PUGLIESE



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itting in his office in Los Angeles, Michael Mann is positioned in the bottom left-hand corner of the Zoom frame, a widescreen window looming behind him. Even for interviews, it seems, he masterfully maps out the image, just as the characters in his movies are backdropped by vast spaces and towering structures, and never more so than in *Heat*.

Set in a Los Angeles of shimmering steel and twinkling lights, Mann's operatic tale of obsessed LA cop Vincent Hanna (Al Pacino) tracking master thief Neil McCauley (Robert De Niro) is the filmmaker's magnum opus – no mean feat given he has *Thief*, *Manhunter*, *The Last Of The Mohicans*, *The Insider*, *Ali*, *Miami Vice* (film and TV show) and *Collateral* on his CV. *Heat* is more than just a crime picture. It takes in love and death, life and work... the whole shebang.

What's more, its characters have consumed 79-year-old Mann for most of his adult life, ever since Charles 'Chuck' Adamson, a former Chicago detective who acted as technical adviser on the

director's theatrical debut *Thief* (1981), told him about the real-life McCauley. That's right, he existed: Adamson staked out his crew only to witness them walk away from a heist they'd been planning for weeks when McCauley spotted a rogue vehicle in the parking lot; hunter and quarry later sat down for coffee, comparing lives; and finally, during another robbery, Adamson shot and killed his man.

In 1989, Mann turned the stranger-than-fiction story into TV movie *L.A. Takedown*. In '95, he expanded and elevated it into *Heat*. And now, in 2022, Mann and award-winning author Meg Gardiner have co-written *Heat 2*, an epic crime novel in which the complex plot does a *The Godfather: Part II* by unfurling both forwards and backwards. In the prequel segments, set in Chicago '88, a ruthless young Hanna's pursuit of a crew propels him unknowingly into the orbit of McCauley – a very different McCauley to the controlled, calculating crim we meet in *Heat*. And in the sequel sections, set primarily in 2000, the action migrates to Paraguay and Mexico before returning to the mean streets of LA.

"The characters never ceased to be alive," says Mann, shuffling papers and tapping at a keyboard as he talks. In a week's time he starts shooting long-cherished biopic *Enzo Ferrari*, his first feature since 2015's underrated cybercrime thriller *Blackhat*. Every minute counts. "The only reason not to go further with the characters was because Neil McCauley was dead [at the end of *Heat*]. At one point, it occurred to me how to finesse that in having a prequel in which events occur that Hanna is also involved in – although him and McCauley have no contact. And in some of those events six or seven years prior to the movie, Chris Shiherlis [played

by Val Kilmer in *Heat*] is involved. But then events occur well after *Heat* the motion picture, and that event unwittingly means Hanna can become an agent, almost acting on Neil McCauley's behalf, in a way."

Like Mann's movies, *Heat 2* is tough and terse and strikingly poetic. A cracking read, it will surely make for a cracking movie – Mann's intention. He's keen to talk all about that, and much else besides. So let's get started...

What is it that keeps drawing you back to this world, these characters?

Oh, wow. The complexity of their lives is completely real to me. They're based on real people. But that's not just it. It's the emotional complexity. The intensity of the ride. The degree to which we emotionally connect with them, and what they want is so immediately challenged by the environments that, say, Chris Shiherlis finds himself in when he's desperately fleeing LA after the death of Neil McCauley.

He knows he's being hunted and separated from his wife – Charlene, who's played by Ashley Judd. And he's thrown into a completely new and different world of organised crime with a Taiwanese Mafia family. So we are dealing with arms and communication systems. But it's all in a kind of transnational organised crime-evolved methodology. It's based on somebody I met when I was in Ciudad del Este, doing *Miami Vice*. He spoke about six languages, and was quite brilliant.

You mentioned real people. Didn't Charles Adamson tell you the tale, back when he was a technical adviser on *Thief*?

I met Chuck before I did *Thief*. I met Chuck in the late '70s. At one point in the early '80s, he told me the anecdote about McCauley, which became the genesis of *Heat*. Chuck's a very, very funny guy. A great raconteur. He was the second-in-command at a Criminal Intelligence Unit, which was an elite major crime unit in Chicago, and his partner was Dennis Farina.

When you wrote the screenplay for *Heat*, how much of the backstory did you know?

The backstory is actually foundational. When I'm working with actors, I want a complete biography. They have to know what they were doing when they were 11. If they were ostracised, if their fathers ran out on them – as in Neil McCauley's case – they might have ended up in an institution. And then he and his brother were separated in a series of foster homes, and it's making him a very angry 11- and 12-year-old, dressed in odd clothes, and



With Steven Waddington and Daniel Day-Lewis making *The Last Of The Mohicans*.



Mann directing Al Pacino and Robert De Niro in *Heat*'s iconic coffee scene.

victimised by the viciousness of preteens in social situations. And that makes him violent, and one thing leads to another, and he becomes somebody with extremely low self-esteem. He thinks he's nothing. But he's got a violently aggressive ego, and that makes for a dangerous character, that then propels him into all manner of violence. Because the self is within his head and the rest of it is just a meat machine. He doesn't care what happens to it. He'll go from zero to 60 in violence in a heartbeat. That makes him valuable to street crews.

That's detailed.

There's a whole history and a causality that fascinates me. I do that for every character I've ever portrayed in a drama. So they're very much alive, and they're based on an aggregate of lots of different kinds of experiences that I've had. There's almost nothing I can't relate back to, like: "I met such-and-such thief" or "I met this cop" or "I met this global operator in the DEA Special Operations Division who did this amazing stuff in Beirut".

Did you know these kinds of guys when you were growing up?

I grew up in the city of Chicago, and was

working my way through school. You know, at one point I was a cab driver. I worked in construction for a cement contractor on the southside and then the westside. So I was familiar with street life. I didn't know highline professional thieves like John Santucci, who *Thief* is based on. But I knew my way around it, and I knew how to meet people.

I met Charlie Adamson by happenstance. Charlie opened up a lot of doors for me, and a lot of the times we had together, doing

research, were hilarious in a very Chicago kind of way. Chicago was a very specific place, and a kind of Weimar Berlin of wit. Chicago had everybody from Saul Bellow to James T. Farrell and Studs Terkel. It had that whole rich literary tradition in the city. So you know

how to move around and meet people.

Talking of literature, your novel, like your films, is so clipped and brutal, but also lyrical in places. Does that come from you? Is that how you see the world?

Honestly, I don't know. I do know that I would write things and think, 'This is marvellous,' and then I'd go to sleep and wake up in the morning and say, "It's a total

piece of crap." And I'd throw it away [*laughs*]. So it's maybe by a process of reduction that it wound up having this terse quality to it. But it's just getting to the feeling.

You intend to make it into a movie. Why not a TV series?

There's fantastic work in television, and for whatever reason, it has a short half-life. Dino De Laurentiis, one time, said to me about television, "Michael, there's a small screen and there's the big screen." [*laughs*] That said it all, you know?

And you still feel that, even in this golden age of TV?

I'm not putting down television. It really is [*a golden age*]. But the big, cinematic experience – there's nothing like it. When we had a screening of *Heat* at the Academy, probably 80 per cent of the audience had never seen it on the big screen, and the reaction was astonishing. I had the whole cast there, and Chris Nolan moderated it. It's on the Blu-ray – we had a panel discussion afterwards. It was really fascinating to me, to see the difference and the impact.

You'll have to recast the movie. Can anybody match the thrill and frisson generated by De Niro and Pacino having coffee together?



‘FOR WHATEVER REASON, TV HAS A SHORT HALF-LIFE’

➡ It's not because it's Al and Bob. It's because Al and Bob are such fantastic actors that they can bring themselves into being Hanna and McCauley. And Bob and Al both trained for three or four months for those roles. There's nothing in that movie that De Niro's doing that he could not do in life, including walking into a bank, armed, and walking out, and sitting down with me in a coffee shop afterwards and telling me where the guards were, where the cameras were, how he'd make his entry, and how he'd get out. The actors acquired those skills, so that they became reflexive. They weren't acting. They were doing. There's a big difference.

I think audiences are brilliant, and they perceive way more than they even know they perceive. And there's a certain truth-telling style where they're experiencing it. It opens up a conduit for emotional connection that you don't get when characters are two-dimensional archetypes or stereotypes or derivative.

So you think younger actors could nail it because the characters are there, and you'll train the actors to know the roles inside out?

Yeah.

Heat is a prime example of the 'Mann's man'. It runs through your films. What is it that keeps drawing you back to these super-professional, obsessive men?

It's women, too. It's not so much professional as being alive and wanting to do something with great intensity, as opposed to just kind of drifting through life in some half-anaesthetised way. So I wanted people who are really dynamic and committed to wanting to do something. It doesn't matter if it's a woman like Joan Allen in *Manhunter* or whether it's Neil McCauley in this thing or Ana Liu, who's a Taiwanese woman who's quite brilliant, who's a main character in the novel, *Heat 2*. There's ambition. 'I want something.'

Are you like that? When you make a movie, you immerse yourself for years at a time...

I'm tortured by indecision just like everyone else, but I tend to... Yeah, I tend to hook onto things, and I'm going to make it happen. I'm fairly stubborn about persisting, and climbing whatever mountain.

There's a fantastic moment in *Heat* where Hanna is staring at the washing up and it cuts to him in a chopper over LA. Do you ever ponder the chores and think, 'Fuck this, I'm going back to the office'?

No, I usually don't like the office. I get into a car and go to some place – some



FIVE STAR TURNS

MANHUNTER 1986

Mann brought a clipped, clinical exactitude to his high-tension thriller. While Brian Cox's taunting gourmand chills, William Petersen brings piercing focus to the detective, one of Mann's trademark troubled pros.

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS 1992

Mann and Daniel Day-Lewis made a fine pairing in this adventure, Mann embracing the wilderness with strapping gusto, supported by Day-Lewis's Mann's-man intensity of dedication as fenced-in hero Hawkeye.

HEAT 1995

A precision-orchestrated epic of cop-criminal complicity. As none-more-Mann-ly caffeinated professionals, Robert De Niro and Al Pacino's Method-monks restraint serves Mann's forensic acuity impeccably.

THE INSIDER 1999

A test-case in making tiny details sting. Mann's nightmarish conspiracy thriller focuses on a ciggy industry whistleblower. A bullet left in a letterbox is all he needs to max tension.

COLLATERAL 2004

His images gleaming, Mann revisits the LA of his earlier crime movies. The clash between contract-killer Tom Cruise – excellent – and cabbie Jamie Foxx almost matches Pacino/De Niro for controlled tension. **KH**



WARNER BROS., DISNEY, PARAMOUNT, STUDIOCANAL

24-hour restaurant. I like being up at odd hours when other people aren't.

Heat offers the gold standard of cinema shootouts. How do you even begin to put something like that together?

I get next to people who have been in those situations, number one. And number two, I do a lot of training. And it becomes a choreography. But choreography is like a dialogue scene – there has to be a story to it. What are they trying to do? Who's their character? What's their background? They have these skill-sets. How well are they trained? They understand the politics and the psychology of their adversary.

The police want to overwhelm and empower. They're used to overpowering civilians. The police are not very good when they're attacked by people who have serious military skills. They're not used to being attacked. And it's exactly what these guys do. So when they're ambushed by a police presence in a blockade, they attack the ambush, with the singular purpose of getting out, because they know more police assets are going to come in.

So it's more from real-life than studying action cinema? *The Wild Bunch* is one of your favourite movies. Did you not study Peckinpah's shootouts?

[Shakes head] We did a lot of training with a lot of guys from Mick Gould, who I've worked with a lot. He used to be Head of Close Quarter Combat Training for the SAS. And Steve Mitchell, who writes under the name of Andy McNab. So both of those guys were instrumental in the training regimen they put everybody through.

What do you think of modern-day action cinema?

I'm just bored by it. It's not very interesting. I mean, sometimes the choreography is so outrageous that it's fascinating, and it is quite good. But generally, no. It's just stale.

On action films *Miami Vice* and *Collateral*, you were one of the first major directors to embrace digital photography. Why?

Because in *Collateral*, it all takes place in one night in LA. And I wanted to see into the night in the way you can see into the night [in real life], particularly with the marine layers at about 1,200 ft, and there are so many vapour lamps, bouncing off the bottom of the clouds, and there's soft illumination. You can see depth. You could not get it on photochemical film. I knew from experiments that we did on

Ali, with a couple of video sequences, that there's a certain truth-telling style. But more important, we could manipulate the technology to be able to see into the night, and to see it forever. So that was it. We spent three months doing R&D on those systems. It became the first photoreal digital video film. The difficulty with it is that it was then transferred onto photochemical for release. Now, with digital cinema, it's really great, because you're actually getting what you shot.

How was it working with Tom Cruise?

He's great. He's very committed, and I had a really good time working with him. He and Jamie [Foxy], the whole group. And Tom's interested in new things, new technology, and new ways of seeing. Which, to me, I associate with some of the challenges in doing this novel. I mean, this crew in *Heat*, back in 1995, was one of the best crews on the street. But what they were doing was basically 19th-century bandito bank robberies. One of the exciting challenges for the book was to do this seismic, historical transition into transnational, organised

crime, where you're not operating inside of a judicial system with police and trials and lawyers and prisons, but you're flying high. You're at 40,000ft. Pivoting, the virtual world. And that's where Chris Shiherlis matures, and that's where the novel goes. So when you're

talking about the technology in *Collateral*, it's also true with the content of *Heat 2*. I'm attracted to, you know, what's next.

You mentioned Cruise was committed, but you also worked with Daniel Day-Lewis on *The Last Of The Mohicans*. He's Mr. Commitment!

Oh, Daniel's my pal. All the actors I've worked with, all think the same. They get totally into it, to the point where they're like, "Are people actually paying us to do this?" There's as much real-life experience as possible. In the case of *The Last Of The Mohicans*, Daniel spent about eight or nine months training for that. So he could do everything that Hawkeye could do, and it culminated in a week in a national forest where if he didn't shoot it or trap it, he didn't eat.

Did *The Last Of The Mohicans* feel like a departure? You're an urban filmmaker, and suddenly you were making a historical epic in the wilderness...

No, not at all. It's the same thing. You just have to go to different sources.

MICHAEL MANN IN NUMBERS

|||||

3

Cameras used to capture *Heat*'s De Niro/Pacino coffee-shop exchange

17

NUMBER OF TAXICABS
BUILT FOR
COLLATERAL

3,000

Extras used for *Blackhat*'s Balinese Nyepi Day celebration scene

50-60

NUMBER OF ACTORS
CONSIDERED TO
PLAY *MANHUNTER*'S FRANCIS DOLLARHYDE

\$1,041,944,611

Accumulated box-office take of his films as director



➡ I absolutely wanted to know what the conflicts were. And if there's any approach I had, it was to really dive down into the dimensionalities and the specificities. So I wanted to know not just how people dressed and looked, I wanted to know how they thought. What was courtship among Mohicans? Was property passed down through the mother or the father? If it was matrilineal, you'd have been closer to your mother's brother than your father's brother. All the details. What music was popular in 1755 in London, in Portman Square, which was probably where Cora [played by Madeleine Stowe] lived. And it's about the property – which meant that the colonials were property. Why was there this widespread, violent, visceral response amongst everyday people against tyranny? That tyranny was intolerable? There was a visceral response that created a revolution.

Is it harder to research when it's a period piece?

It's really the same kind of questioning, and the same kind of pursuit. The only difference is, there's nobody to talk to! I found a historian who talked to the grandchildren of people who had lived through that, and told them stories.

Back to your actors. We've recently lost the great James Caan. How was he to work with on *Thief*?

Jimmy was great. The character was made for him. He was made for the character. There's an outrageous, sarcastic quality to Frank that was all Jimmy [laughs]. There was a line I wrote where some guy is affronting him. He says, "Is he talking to me, or has somebody else come in the room?" It's pure Frank, it's pure James Caan.

And Brian Cox is excellent as Hannibal Lecktor [as the character is spelled in the screenplay] in *Manhunter*...

Yeah. I just ran into Brian about two months ago. It was great to see him. He's a brilliant actor. He was brilliant when he did the movie. It was great working with him. We had a very good time together. We both remember it very fondly. He's cantankerous, which I love.

Did you watch *The Silence Of The Lambs*?

I did, and I thought it was... Yeah, I liked it. I mean, Jon Demme – I knew Jon Demme pretty well. For me, I didn't... The psychopathology of immersing yourself in the psychopathology of the characters, the meaning, the grotesquery, the damaged human life of *Red Dragon*, which became *Manhunter*, it's something you do. And after two years, you don't want to go

back to that world. So I had no interest in doing any of the further... [trails off]

So you never watched the films after *Lambs*, or the TV series *Hannibal*?

No. Not at all. I have zero interest.

Let's move on to *The Insider*. It got seven Oscar nominations, three for you, but lost out. Does it bother you that the Academy has never rewarded you?

Honestly, I don't think like that. I mean, awards are nice. But that's as far as it goes. I'm motivated by the story I want to tell, and the content, not by a little statue. Philip Seymour [Hoffman] said it best. He said, "It's a dangerous statue. If you win one of those, you put it in a showbox, and stick it on a shelf somewhere."

There's a lot of distortion that goes on with it. I mean, it's nice to be appreciated. I'm very appreciative of the fact that *Heat* has sustained the cultural memory over these years. I'm proud of that. People come up to me and quote lines. That means a lot more to me than having won a statue. I don't think you could tell me the movie in 1996 that did win the Academy Award.

Not right now. Though it was *American Beauty* that beat *The Insider* in 2001. *American Beauty* has not aged nearly so well...

I remember [1996] only because Al [Pacino] came over when the nominations came out. He came over to the house to commiserate [laughs]. My wife and I were sitting in the kitchen. I was like, "That's too bad. We didn't get nominated. What are we having for dinner?" That was about it. I think the work of the actors deserved to be nominated. But what can you do?

True. Do you consider *Heat* to be your masterpiece?

I don't wake up in the morning and look in the mirror and say, "Oh, what's my masterpiece?" I don't. I think of [Heat] as a



Tom Signorelli and James Caan in *Thief*.

heavily architected, structural narrative that was very challenging to do in a quantitative kind of way. Now, nobody else understands what I'm talking about. But this is the way I see it. There was a real effort and design in maximising the polarities between this person's life and that person's life. They all come into collision, and drive towards the culmination. And so a large orchestral sense of storytelling is something that we wanted to build.

'AWARDS ARE NICE. BUT THAT'S AS FAR AS IT GOES'

You've made all sorts of films but people think of you as a master of crime movies. Who else do you rate within the genre: De Palma, Scorsese, Gray?
I don't think of *Heat* as a genre film. To me, it's a drama

about life. I don't know what a genre picture really is. I mean, I think *The Godfather* is a melodrama in the best sense of the word, and it's one of the world's best melodramas, you know? It's a family-drama. It happens to be where it's set. It's not a gangster picture. It's a godfather. The intent behind *Heat* is hardly a genre intent. It's just: tell a story, and dwell in a free-established milieu.

Our time's up, but we must mention *Enzo Ferrari* before you go. What can you tell us about it?

We start shooting a week from Monday. It takes place in three months of the summer of 1957. Parts of it are very funny. It's a very unexpected human drama of a life that is completely irrational and crazy. It's a man, Enzo Ferrari [played by Adam Driver], who, in one half of his life, is disordered, chaotic, and emotionally unpredictable, and in the other half of his life, he has the precision of a fine draughtsman, and an engineer, and an innovator, and is highly artistic. He has two halves that don't connect, in this fascinating way. [There are] all of these conflicts, including his second family that the first family doesn't know about. Plus, his companies are going broke, and he's being threatened by his arch-competitor, Maserati. All of these are in collision in one three-month period.



And obviously it has to be seen on the big screen?
Yeah. It's very intense.

HEAT 2 IS PUBLISHED ON 18 AUGUST.

MICHAEL MANN LINE READING

"A GUY TOLD ME ONE TIME, 'DON'T LET YOURSELF GET ATTACHED TO ANYTHING YOU ARE NOT WILLING TO WALK OUT ON IN 30 SECONDS FLAT IF YOU FEEL THE HEAT AROUND THE CORNER.'"

NEIL MCCAULEY *HEAT*

"This was too good to last."

SONNY CROCKETT *MIAMI VICE*

"NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES, NO MATTER HOW FAR. I WILL FIND YOU!"

HAWKEYE *THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS*



EDITED BY
MATTHEW LEYLAND
@TOTALFILM_MATT

★★★★★
TOTALLY DOPE

★★★★★
FILLS US WITH
HOPE

★★★★★
WE THINK
YOU'LL COPE

★★★★★
ROPE(Y)

★★★★★
NAH, NAW...
WHAT'S THE
WORD WE'RE
LOOKING FOR?



SCREE

THE WORLD'S MOST TRUSTED MOVIE

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NOPE

Things are looking up...

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ALSO RELEASED

We couldn't see them in time for this issue, so head to gamesradar.com/totalfilm for reviews of the following:

TITLE	RELEASE DATE
Beast	26 August
The Invitation	26 August
See How They Run	9 September

For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm

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N

REVIEWS

NOPE

TBC

Jordan Peele goes BIG...

★★★★★ OUT NOW CINEMAS



STAGECOACH
1939
John Ford's hugely influential western gets turned inside-out in *Nope*.

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS
1953
Ace adap of Wells' classic alien-invasion novel. Spielberg's 2005 take is underrated.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND
1977
If you want fear and wonder, the sky's the limit. The mothership movie remains the daddy.

For more reviews visit [gamesradar.com/totalfilm](https://www.gamesradar.com/totalfilm)

A black screen. Sounds from a sitcom: peppy line readings, canned laughter. Then... crashing objects, thumps and grunts. Screams rise sharply and stop abruptly. An image comes into focus: a blood-smeared chimp. It sits on a set amid human corpses. The APPLAUSE sign is lit but the banks of chairs are empty.

It's a killer opening, strange and disquieting. And the weirdness is only just beginning. In the very next scene, set on a Californian ranch encircled by mountains, an older and younger man are training a horse when peculiar noises fill the valley. The older man slumps on the horse. Has he been shot? Heart attack? A key, of all things, sticks out of the stallion's bloodied flank.

Cut to half a year later and we learn that the younger man is sombre, taciturn OJ Haywood (Daniel Kaluuya). The older man, Otis Haywood Sr. (Keith David), dead these past six months, was his father. They are, along with OJ's chatty younger sister Emerald (Keke Palmer), Haywood Hollywood Horses, providing wrangled beasts to screen productions large and small. In fact, Emerald and OJ are the great-great-great-grandchildren of the Black man riding a horse in the Muybridge clip, the first series of photographs put in sequential order to create a moving image. The jockey's name, say the siblings, was Alastair E. Haywood (he's historically credited as G. Domm, and the clip is titled *Sallie Gardner At A Gallop*), and though he was the first movie star, stuntman and animal wrangler, he's been erased from history.

OJ and Emerald won't be similarly erased. Realising that something very



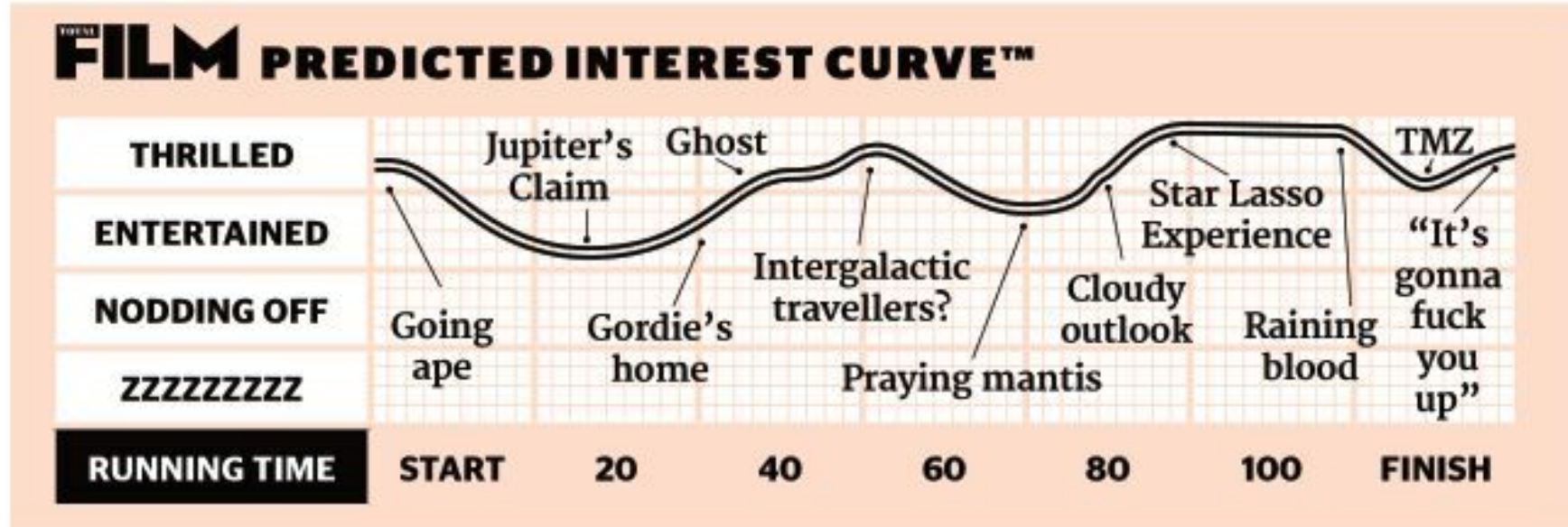
"That cloud looks like a duck, and that one over there, that looks like terror beyond comprehension."

odd and extremely scary is happening in the isolated gulch they inhabit, they set out to record it in order to secure not so much fame as their name. If you've not seen the trailers, you'd best stop reading here. If you have, you'll know it's UFO-related matters that are at hand, with the siblings, aided by electronics guy Angel (Brandon Perea) and Hollywood cameraman Antlers (Michael Wincott, now as craggy as he is gravelly) setting out to capture definitive proof. "All that shit online is fake," says OJ. What he wants is "the Oprah shot".

Working on a scale far grander than those in *Get Out* and *Us*, writer/director Jordan Peele is here looking to the skies – and to Steven Spielberg, with *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* a big influence. Though set in one sun-blasted valley with just a handful

DIRECTOR Jordan Peele **STARRING** Daniel Kaluuya, Keke Palmer, Steven Yuen, Brandon Perea, Michael Wincott **SCREENPLAY** Jordan Peele **DISTRIBUTOR** Universal **RUNNING TIME** 135 mins

of characters (also key is Steven Yeun's ex-child star Ricky Park, who performed on the '90s sitcom that opens the movie and now runs a tourist-attraction Old West town), *Nope* employs increasingly ambitious set-pieces built around impressively integrated effects. It's shot by Hoyte Van Hoytema, no stranger to scale having photographed *Ad Astra* and Christopher Nolan's last three movies, including, of course, another space picture, *Interstellar*. He shoots on IMAX and 65mm to give us Oprah shots of colossal parched landscapes and vast, star-studded skies.





The action builds slowly, masterfully, all glimpsed shadows in clouds and the kind of uncanny, unnerving images that Peele does so well: a pig on a rooftop, a blood-spattered plimsoll balanced impossibly on its heel, blood raining from the sky. Sound comes and goes, with the sudden silences that smother the valley proving even more terrifying than the scratchy, quavering score with its insectoid clicks and stabs of strings, or the constant chirrup of cicadas that scuffs and scrapes at viewers' brains. "Nope", "Nah", "No" say the characters on numerous occasions, and you'll be nodding in agreement.

As with *Us*, the themes here are less explicit, coherent and fully integrated than they were in *Get Out*. But that's OK, because what's swirling like the dust

'Sound comes and goes, with the sudden silences that smother the valley proving even more terrifying than the scratchy, quavering score'

clouds whipped up by alien activity is fascinating: the spectacle-isation and erasure of Black people, and how being invaded is nothing new for people of colour. Also present is the rebuilding of the relationship between Emerald and OJ, as the former finally steps out of the shadows of the male Haywoods. We also get a shrewd melding of genres.

Science fiction and horror are obviously in the mix – but Peele also puts his own spin on the kind of western adventures with which Hollywood for so long celebrated a time when genocide was committed in the name of 'civilisation'.

And then, after all the build-up, one of the characters says, "It's heeere!" (a nod to Spielberg, surely, given he produced *Poltergeist*) and the final act delivers on spectacle, big time, after so much suspense. Some of the narrative's established rules prove to be flaky, but that's nit-picking. This is an original IP event movie full of wonderment, dread and – even if you've seen the second trailer – surprises. It's a thrilled "Yup!" for *Nope*. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

THE VERDICT Peele is three for three. You'll spill out into the night jawing with your friends and gazing at the stars.





Sexy? Yes. Comfortable? No.

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED

VIDEODROME
1983
Cronenberg's masterpiece is an essential body horror text.

DEAD RINGERS
1988
Jeremy Irons as twin gynaecologists who fall out over a woman. Rachel Weisz is to star in a female-framed remake.

WALL-E 2008
Cronenberg's latest and Pixar's beloved animation have similar ecological concerns.

For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm

CRIMES OF THE FUTURE TBC

Surgical yikes...

★★★★★ OUT 9 SEPTEMBER CINEMAS

David Cronenberg's first unashamed body horror in 23 years feels authentically part of his oeuvre in a way that'll delight ravenous fans - even if the overly talky, oddly open-ended script doesn't hit the heights of his '80s heyday.

Like much of the writer/director's work, *Crimes...* is about the interplay between the body and technology, the new flesh and the old. Here, pain is a thing of the past; human bodies are changing. Saul Tenser (Viggo Mortensen) has one such body, which has started to produce 'neo-organs'. Their purpose is unclear, because Tenser has them surgically removed by partner Caprice (Léa Seydoux) in celebrated performance-art shows.

Neo-organs are policed both by the National Organ Register, represented

DIRECTOR David Cronenberg **STARRING** Viggo Mortensen, Léa Seydoux, Kristen Stewart, Welket Bungué, Don McKellar **SCREENPLAY** David Cronenberg **DISTRIBUTOR** Vertigo **RUNNING TIME** 107 mins

by a pair of oddball employees, Wippet (Don McKellar) and Timlin (an underused Kristen Stewart), and the New Vice Crime unit, who work with Tenser to keep human evolution in check. But there are groups who believe change should be curtailed no longer...

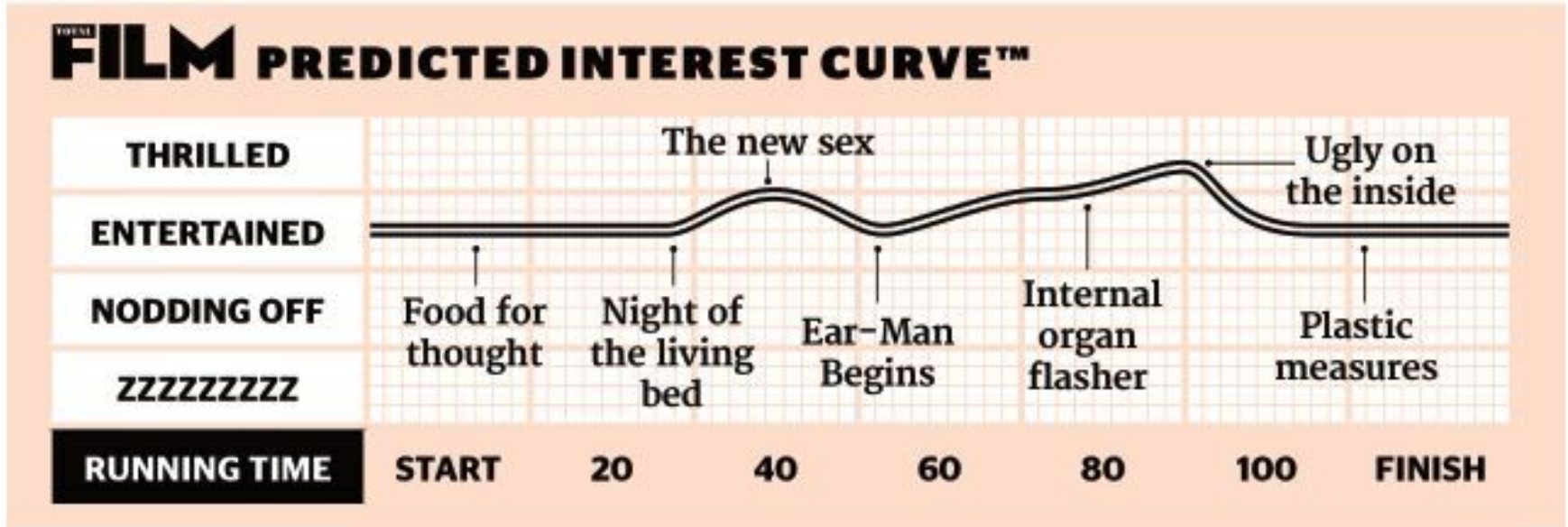
Crimes isn't for the faint of heart. Central to Tenser's shows is an autopsy machine that uses skeletal appendages to cut through flesh like butter and extract organs. Most of this is achieved via pleasingly squidgy prosthetics and special effects that exist one step outside recognisable reality.

But despite some gleefully twisted ideas, this isn't one of Cronenberg's strongest screenplays. Overwhelmingly jargon-dense, it turns what would've been subtext in the likes of *Scanners* or *Videodrome* into clumsily vocalised text. Characterisation, meanwhile, is a

mixed bag. Mortensen has done some of his best work under Cronenberg (*A History Of Violence*, *Eastern Promises*), but Tenser is one of the pair's lesser creations. The character is constantly unwell as his body "cooks up" new organs - which translates to Mortensen speaking in a gruff Batman voice between annoying coughs. Seydoux feels more naturally at home in this world, believably connecting the dots between sex and surgery in a way that the script only tells us.

It's a film that feels at times more like a pilot for a series than a self-contained feature - something not helped by its refusal to explore potentially more exciting avenues that are established, then frustratingly swerved. Still, that *Crimes Of The Future* can even be described as successfully 'Cronenbergian' will be enough for many. Forget the new flesh; long live the old master. **JORDAN FARLEY**

THE VERDICT Sex, violence and surgery: the king of body horror is back, but the script could do with a scalpel.



VERTIGO, UNIVERSAL, SONY

THE FORGIVEN TBC

Fiennes and sandy...

★★★★★ OUT 2 SEPTEMBER CINEMAS

East and west literally collide in writer/director John Michael McDonagh's glossily decadent thriller. Speeding to a lavish house party, drunk English doctor David (a bluff, arrogant Ralph Fiennes) runs over and kills a young fossil-seller on a Moroccan desert road.

What follows isn't another of McDonagh's tough black comedies, a la *The Guard* or *Calvary*. This time he plays it straight, ripping into the casual racism of the careless rich as David and his shrilly unhappy wife Jo (a game but shortchanged Jessica Chastain) muster contrition for the cops. Things get nicely chewy however, when the boy's desert-dwelling father (Ismael Kanater) insists that David travel to the burial, leaving Jo to the glamorous designer-clad debauchery of the party.

But cleaving the story into two quests shows up the film's uneasy mix of tones. There's spiky satire as Jo attempts to find herself while surrounded by bored and bitchy socialites, urged on by Matt Smith's cynical host. But more gripping is David's quiet search for redemption, when he's dragged into the dirt-poor life of the Atlas Mountain tribes and their harsh honour code. Kanater's dignified patriarch, thrumming silently with rage and misery, makes a fine foil for Fiennes' thoughtful performance. Together, they're a subtle pleasure in an otherwise clunky drama, whose shimmering good looks mask an uncomplicated morality tale. **KATE STABLES**

THE VERDICT Fiennes' finesse salvages this surprisingly chilly tale of poisonous poshos at play in the desert.



She had clearly misunderstood the dress code for this walk.



Bloodstained or badly tie-dyed? You decide!

BODIES BODIES BODIES TBC

And then there was fun...

★★★★★ OUT 9 SEPTEMBER CINEMAS

I'll be there for you, when the rain starts to pour," ran the theme tune from *Friends*. Yet the exact opposite applies in this darkly entertaining comedy slasher, in which a quintet of Gen-Z contemporaries – their numbers swelled by two unwanted interlopers – come to realise that it wasn't such a good idea to see out a hurricane at one of their parent's mansions.

The situation is already tense by the time recovering addict Sophie (Amandla Stenberg) rocks up uninvited with her girlfriend Bee (Maria Bakalova). That's thanks to stoner rich kid David's (Pete Davidson) spiky remarks having alienated his house guests – Sophie's ex Jordan (Myha'la Herrold), podcasting show-off Alice (Rachel Sennott) and her forty-something Tinder date Greg (Lee Pace) among them. Yet things get downright lethal when they play the parlour game of the title, a find-the-murderer frivolity that becomes deadly serious after one of their number is found deceased for real.

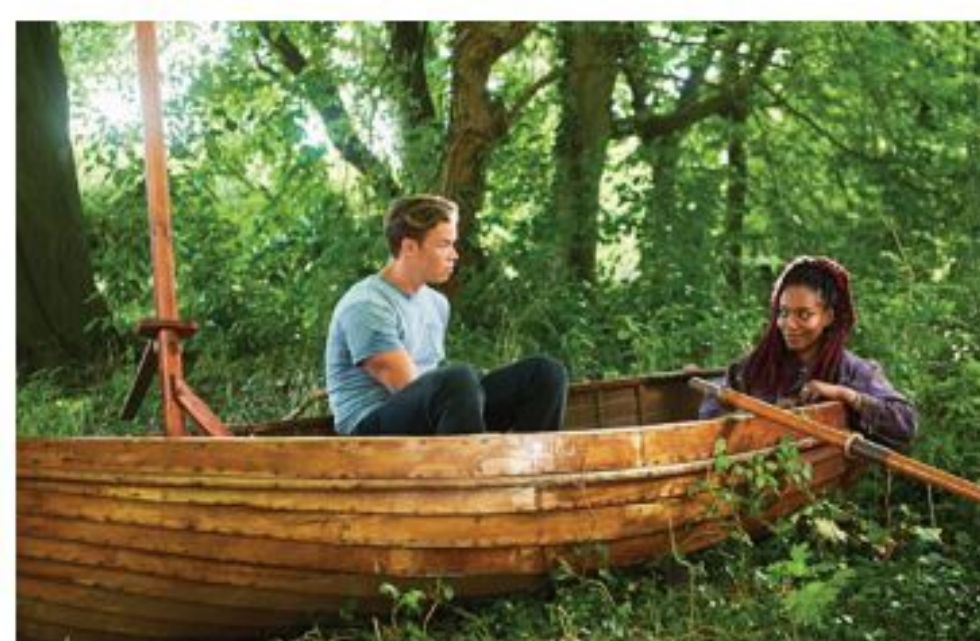
With trust in short supply, it isn't long before the rest start turning on each other. But as riotously enjoyable as it is to replay *And Then There Were None* with a cool young cast, the real pleasure of Halina Reijn's film comes from its waspish dialogue and spiteful revelations. As Chandler might say, could things be any more toxic? **NEIL SMITH**

THE VERDICT *Friends* to the end becomes a literal proposition in this barbed and bloody ensemble stalk-fest.



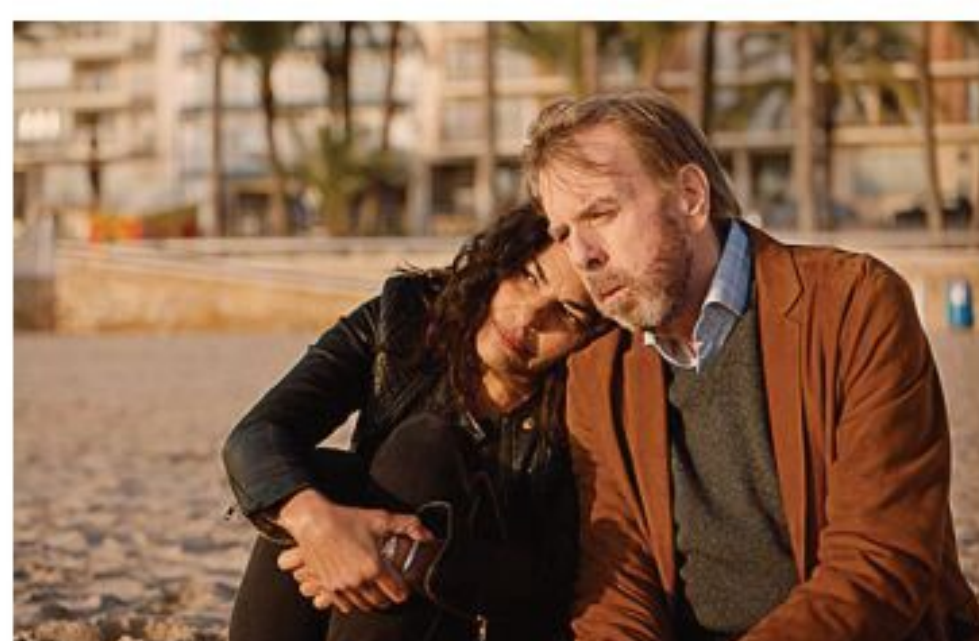
QUEEN OF GLORY TBC
★★★★★ OUT 26 AUGUST
CINEMAS

First-time writer/director Nana Mensah also takes the lead in this award-winning indie gem, playing Ivy League-educated doctoral student Sarah Obeng. When her mother passes away suddenly, Sarah inherits her Christian bookshop in the bustling heart of the Bronx. Mensah (*13 Reasons Why*) proves herself a rare talent both behind and in front of the camera, turning what could have been a pedestrian tale of grief into something funny, charming and ultimately profound. The filmmaker also demonstrates how budgetary constraints can lend certain stories an unreplicable authenticity. **LEILA LATIF**



THE SCORE TBC
★★★★★ OUT 9 SEPTEMBER
CINEMAS

This crime-drama musical (!) centres on amateur crims Mike and Troy (Johnny Flynn, Will Poulter), who drive to a remote café to exchange a bag of cash for unspecified goods. As they wait for the other party to turn up, they have conversations by turn humorous and loaded (sometimes both at once), Troy connects with waitress Gloria (Naomi Ackie), and the cast deliver folkloric tunes (penned by Flynn) that express characters' interior states. The shuffling of elements isn't always smooth, but debut writer/director Malachi Smyth shows promise and a pleasing love of language. **JAMIE GRAHAM**



IT SNOWS IN BENIDORM 15
★★★★★ OUT 2 SEP CINEMAS

Newly redundant bachelor Peter (Timothy Spall) heads to out-of-season Benidorm to visit his brother, only to discover his sibling has disappeared without even telling his business partner, nightclub manager Alex (Sarita Choudhury). Written and directed by Catalan filmmaker Isabel Coixet, this slow-burner is less interested in its thriller aspects than in exploring romantic midlife reinvention. While overplaying the meteorological metaphors, the film does capture the strange beauty of Benidorm's brutalist architecture and there are emotionally credible performances from Spall and Choudhury. **TOM DAWSON**



DRY GROUND BURNING 15
★★★★★ OUT 2 SEPTEMBER
CINEMAS

In the favelas of Brazil's Sol Nascente, the resourceful Chitara siphons oil from pipes that run beneath her land. Aided by sister Léa, fresh out of prison, and would-be politician Andreia, she refines it to gasoline to sell to the local motoboys. The vérité style of this Brazilian docudrama proves both a blessing and curse: this is a wholly convincing portrait of a dangerous world, but the most arresting moments are spread too thinly over a bloated runtime, with the mundanities of these women's lives portrayed at indulgent length. **CHRIS SCHILLING**



Anne Frank's harrowing true-life story inspires this heartwarming tale.

WHERE IS ANNE FRANK PG
Soulful searching...

★★★★★ OUT NOW CINEMAS

The diary of Anne Frank is given a thrilling makeover in Ari Folman's latest flight of fancy. The Israeli director is famed for his adult-skewed animations – notably 2008's *Waltz With Bashir* – but this dip into the world of the Jewish girl who hid from the Nazis in her family's home for two years works just as well for children. It's set not during World War 2, mind, but in near-future Amsterdam, where bridges, schools and theatres bear Frank's name.

On a stormy night at the Anne Frank House, where tourists still throng (look closely and you'll spot Tom Cruise and Justin Bieber), Folman goes into magic-realist mode, as Kitty, Anne's imaginary friend from her diaries, comes alive. In search of Anne, Kitty (voiced by Ruby Stokes) ventures through the city, teaming up with a refugee, Peter (Sebastian Croft). The narrative is further layered with flashbacks to Anne (Emily Carey) herself.

At points, Folman explores how Anne's tale has been commodified; elsewhere, he draws comparisons with Europe's ongoing refugee situation. Some of the themes aren't handled with the greatest subtlety, but the animation exhilarates – not least when Kitty and Peter skate through the city, evading the authorities. Combine this visual dazzle with an authentic re-examination of Anne's journey, and you have a haunting parable that works on multiple levels. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE VERDICT Minor gripes aside, this is a beautiful, thoughtful tale, reframing Anne's diary for a new generation.



THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF LONGING TBC

Genie therapy...

★★★★★ OUT 2 SEPTEMBER CINEMA

George Miller's long-gestating follow-up to *Mad Max: Fury Road* is unlikely to be greeted with the same fervour as that 2015 classic. But it'll serve as a broadly enjoyable palate cleanser before *Furiosa* rides along.

In many ways, *Three Thousand Years Of Longing* is everything *Fury Road* isn't. Namely: incessantly talky and virtually devoid of action. That's because, for a significant time, the main characters – Tilda Swinton's 'narratologist' Althea and Idris Elba's pointy-eared Djinn – are confined to an Istanbul hotel room, where lonely Althea is attending a conference.

Discovering a curious bottle at a bazaar, Althea releases the benevolent genie and is promised three wishes in return. To put her *Monkey's Paw* concerns at ease, the Djinn tells Althea how he ended up in a glass-blown cell, a tale spanning dynasties, continents and millennia. Though the pair spend a good while philosophising in bathrobes,

DIRECTOR George Miller **STARRING** Tilda Swinton, Idris Elba, Pia Thunderbolt, Berk Ozturk, Anthony Moisset **SCREENPLAY** George Miller, Augusta Gore **DISTRIBUTOR** Entertainment **RUNNING TIME** 108 mins

each of the Djinn's tales transports us far beyond the hotel. From the court of the Queen of Sheba – a world of myth made real – to the Ottoman Empire and 19th-century Turkey, each fable is an enchanting flight of fancy.

A hopeless romantic, the Djinn has ended up in so much trouble because he's always falling for the women who release him. Althea, meanwhile, "finds feelings through stories". It doesn't take a geni(e)us to work out where the pair are heading. But as a love story, the film doesn't allow its characters to develop the depth of emotion we're supposed to believe they share. The screenplay, written by Miller and his daughter Augusta Gore, isn't short on ambition, doubling as a sweet ode to



ARABIAN NIGHTS 1974
Pasolini's adap of Arabic anthology *One Thousand And One Nights* – the latter a clear inspo for *3KYOL*.

BABE: PIG IN THE CITY 1998
Unlike its gentle predecessor, the Miller-directed sequel is a madcap work of unbridled imagination.

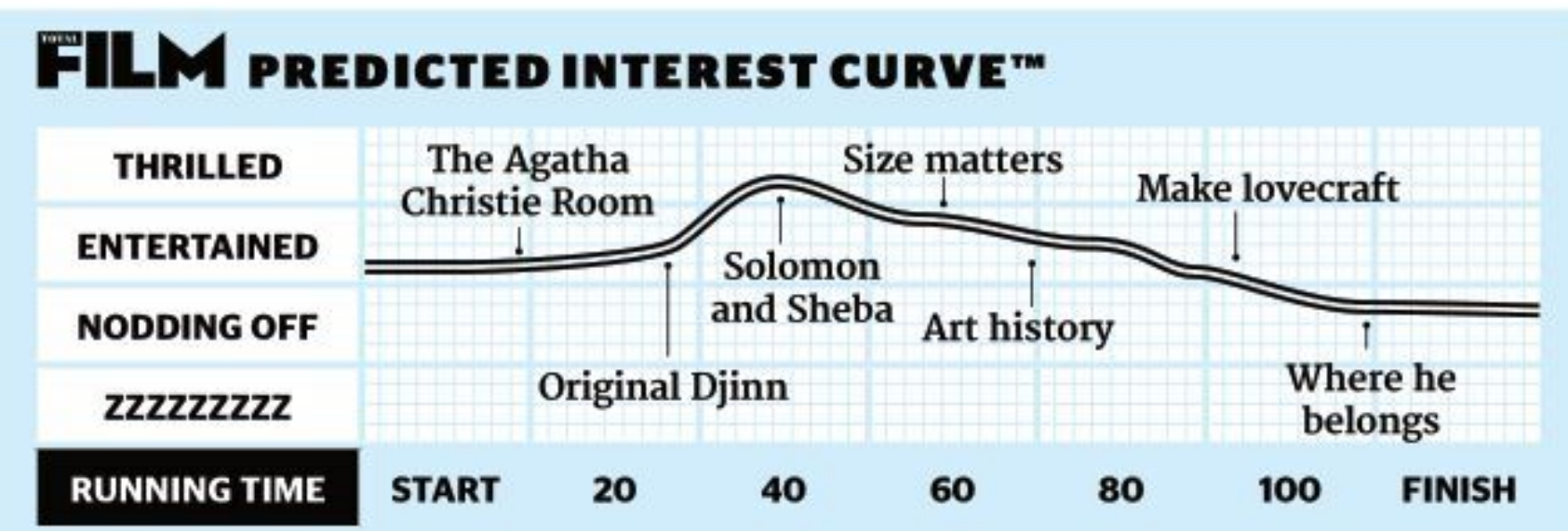
THE SHAPE OF WATER 2017
Similar in sensibility, GDT's Oscar-winning human/creature romance could be a companion piece to *3KYOL*.

storytelling itself. Yet it throws up some honking dialogue (Exhibit A: Elba asking "You want us to make lovecraft?").

It's far more successful as an *Arabian Nights*-style collection of short stories, its fantastical flashbacks bringing Miller's visual invention to the fore. From a musical serenade performed with living instruments to a moment of phantasmagorical horror that evokes Carpenter's *The Thing*, Miller remains a unique visualist. The VFX intentionally fall short of a photoreal threshold, adding to the storybook aesthetic.

An oddball addition to Miller's wildly eclectic filmography, *Three Thousand Years Of Longing* doesn't entirely succeed on its own terms, but remains as daring and experimental as anything he's committed to the screen. **JORDAN FARLEY**

THE VERDICT George Miller combines myth, magic and romance to mixed effect in a visually dazzling adult fairytale starring a committed Swinton and Elba.





"No, Buddy. This is something bigger than a squirrel..."

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED

10 CLOVERFIELD LANE 2016
Trachtenberg and Mary Elizabeth Winstead nail a stripped-back survivalist sequel.

THE REVENANT 2015
Prey gives the bear set-piece a run for its money with a terrifying waterside tussle.

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD 2015
Trachtenberg drew on Miller's extravagant example to reveal character through action.

For more reviews visit [gamesradar.com/totalfilm](https://www.gamesradar.com/totalfilm)

PREY TBC
Stick around...

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** STAR ON DISNEY+

If director Dan Trachtenberg offered a canny twist on what follow-ups can be with 2016's *10 Cloverfield Lane*, he does it again with his *Predator*-series entry. Rejecting any temptation to go bigger and brawnier, or to simply indulge nostalgia, *Prey* is a more lateral beast than most IP variants; a (green) blood relative, not an expansion pack. Relocating the saga, it strips the core *Predator* concept down and rebuilds it in fierce, full-bodied survivalist shapes. And then – crucially – has shit-tons of fun finding ways to notch up a skull count.

Amber Midthunder anchors its appeal as young Comanche woman Naru. The year: 1719. The place: the Northern Great Plains. While Naru

wants to hunt as part of a rite of passage, warrior Taabe (Dakota Beavers) says she's not ready. But despite her young age and inexperience, she is a good tracker. She knows her territory. When she finds a skinned snake and a huge footprint, she knows no bear did that. And when the air shimmers as she tussles with a lion, Naru knows a new danger beckons.

Building environment and character carefully, *Prey* gives us a believable lead in a setting you can feel. While *10 Cloverfield Lane* made one-set cinema compelling, Trachtenberg here takes full advantage of a broader landscape, navigating between sprawling overhead shots and rugged close-ups to evoke its deadly beauty. And it is deadly, as swamp sequences and close encounters of the ursine kind prove.

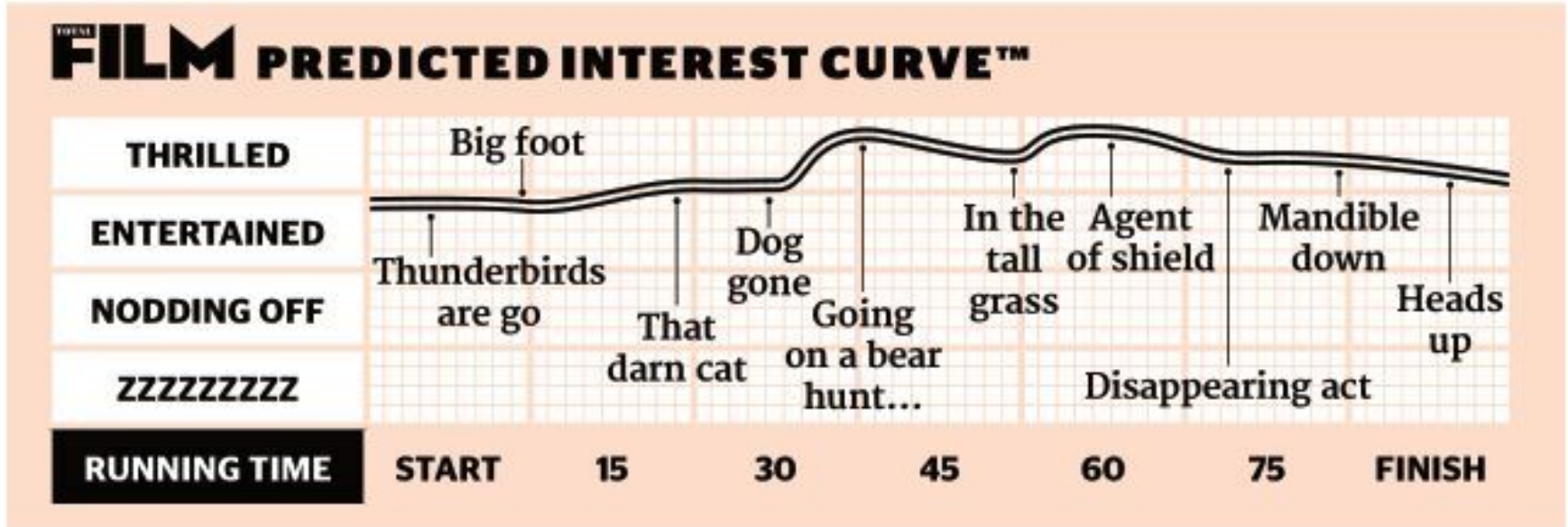
In this context, the Yautja (Dane DiDiegro) swiftly asserts its alpha status. Teasing audiences with stylish glimpses of the mandibled monster resembling some high-plains demon, Trachtenberg ratchets up the gore

DIRECTOR Dan Trachtenberg **STARRING** Amber Midthunder, Dakota Beavers, Stormee Kipp, Dane DiDiegro **SCREENPLAY** Patrick Aison **DISTRIBUTOR** Disney/20th Century Studios **RUNNING TIME** 99 mins

and suspense meticulously before unleashing the creature's full skill-set. A mid-film massacre not only links *Prey* to *Predator 2* (and to the comic 1718); it also revels in the indecently thrilling spectacle of the Yautja at work to wickedly inventive effect.

And Midthunder (TV's *Legion*) proves a more than worthy adversary. Scared but determined, capable yet stretched, she emerges as the *Predator* saga's most likeable lead yet. By the time the end tussle arrives, with Sarah Schachner's terrific score roaring, you wholly root for Naru as her resourcefulness resolves clues subtly seeded throughout the film. For his part, Trachtenberg has resolved how to give the Yautja its due. Best post-Arnie *Predator* variant? Undoubtedly. Best *Predator* movie per se? Tough call, but trust this: *Prey* gets the job done. **KEVIN HARLEY**

THE VERDICT Old mandible chops finally banks the feral, stylish showcase it deserves – and Midthunder kills as its quick-witted foe.



FALL TBC

High anxiety...

★★★★★ OUT 2 SEPTEMBER CINEMAS

Following the death of her husband in a climbing accident, Becky (Grace Caroline Currey) is persuaded by best friend Hunter (Virginia Gardner) to “kick fear in the dick” by scaling a colossal radio tower. No matter that it’s in the middle of nowhere, patrolled by ravenous vultures and rickety as hell. Once they’ve reached the top, however, the ladder breaks, leaving them stranded 2,000ft off the ground...

With a mixture of heart-in-mouth stunts and seamless CGI, director Scott Mann and co-writer Jonathan Frank (whose previous collabs include 2018’s *Final Score*) create a convincingly nightmarish scenario, then keep turning the screws on the poor leads. True, some of the narrative beats are recognisable from *47 Metres Down* (which was produced by the same team) and *The Descent*. And some of the heroes’ more outlandish escape ideas are a little too MacGyver – padded bra and an Instagram plea anyone? Yet *Fall* is extremely effective; indeed, anyone afraid of heights should steer well clear.

The action is always anchored in emotional reality: we spend more than a token amount of time exploring Becky’s grief, while the ebb and flow of her and Hunter’s friendship is well sketched. No matter how unlikely things get, you never doubt that they really care about each other – or that they’re terrified. After 107 minutes of suspended disbelief, you’ll likely feel the same. **MATT GLASBY**

THE VERDICT A vertiginous thriller that takes pains to put you in the protagonists’ shoes.



Now's not the best time for a selfie...



Lola and her cast find themselves between a rock and a hard place.

OFFICIAL COMPETITION TBC

Stress rehearsal...

★★★★★ OUT 26 AUGUST CINEMAS, CURZON HOME CINEMA

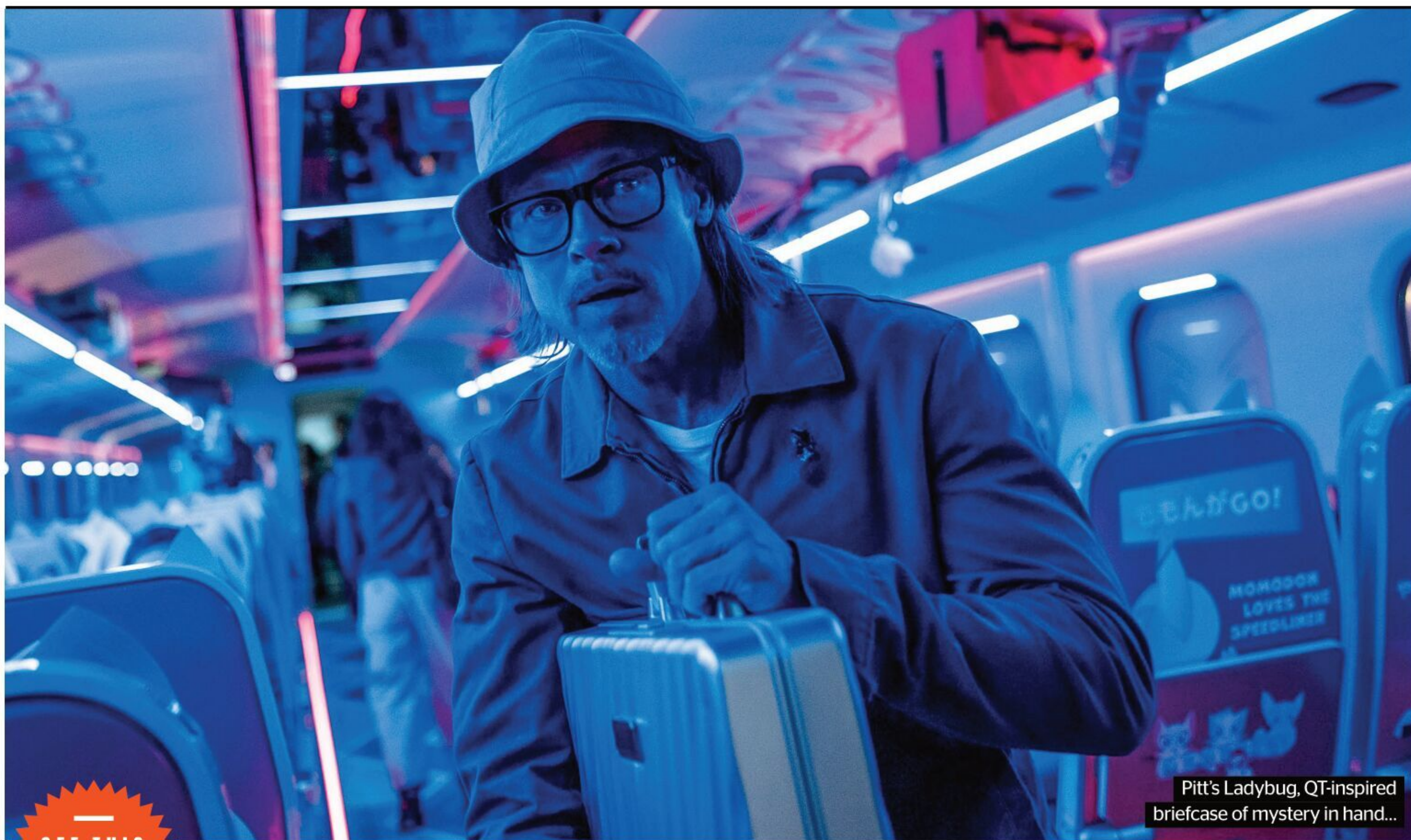
Taking sure-shot aim at both Hollywood narcissism and arthouse puffery, this handsome, deadpan Spanish/Argentinian filmmaking satire is an equal-opportunity offender.

It’s co-directed by Mariano Cohn and Gastón Duprat; like their previous hit, *The Distinguished Citizen* (2016), it makes sharp-eyed mockery of the artistic process, as Hollywood sell-out Felix (Antonio Banderas) and pretentious theatre purist Ivan (Oscar Martínez, subtly pompous) clash throughout arduous rehearsals for a billionaire’s vanity film project.

Famously ‘Method’ director Lola (Penélope Cruz, channelling every auteur ever) concocts a string of ego-bruising challenges to fuel their rivalry. Cohn and Duprat stage her humiliations wittily. In one Tati-worthy sight gag a giant boulder hangs over the quaking pair. Elsewhere, the two are clingfilmed like pupae and made to endure an actor’s worst nightmare (no spoilers).

Shot with widescreen elegance in sleek marble and concrete halls, it’s not a *Hail, Caesar!*-style farce but a stylish chamber piece, with Lola using giant screens to record Ivan and Felix’s torment. But though it cranks up the tension nicely, before long the thespian teasing starts to feel like a two-hour-long series of insider sketches. At least you’re in the company of three world-class performers. If Banderas has the most fun spoofing Felix’s insecurity and preening self-absorption, it’s Cruz’s intense and sweetly sadistic Lola who provides the drollest delights. **KATE STABLES**

THE VERDICT This performance-driven arthouse cinema satire works best when in Cruz’s control.



Pitt's Ladybug, QT-inspired briefcase of mystery in hand...

SEE THIS
IF YOU
LIKED

BULLET TRAIN¹⁵

Blood on the tracks...

★★★★★ OUT NOW CINEMAS

PULP FICTION 1994

Thank Tarantino for *Bullet Train*'s interconnected storylines. And soundtrack. And look and feel...

SNATCH 2000

Pitt mixes it up with mockney geezers, setting a template for Leitch's parade of bonkers Brits.

DEADPOOL 2 2018

If it's gory comic-book violence and unexpected megastars you're after, Leitch is your man.

For more reviews visit [gamesradar.com/totalfilm](https://www.gamesradar.com/totalfilm)

Agatha Christie has been outpaced. Ninety years after she perfected the murder-on-a-train trope, David Leitch shovels a load of Tarantino, Guy Ritchie and manga into the engine to take the railway whodunnit right up to 200mph.

Adapted from Kotaro Isaka's novel, *Bullet Train* finds almost-retired hitman Ladybug (Brad Pitt) take on one last job: stealing a briefcase from Japan's fastest moving train. Strolling in under a bucket hat to the funk baseline of 'Stayin' Alive', Pitt looks like he's walked straight out of his own scenes in *Snatch* – just one of many nods to Ritchie in a film steeped in '90s/'00s Brit crime comedies.

The two goons Ladybug is swiping the case from, Lemon (Brian Tyree

DIRECTOR David Leitch **STARRING** Brad Pitt, Joey King, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Brian Tyree Henry, Andrew Koji **SCREENPLAY** Zak Olkewicz **DISTRIBUTOR** Sony **RUNNING TIME** 126 mins

Henry) and Tangerine (Aaron Taylor-Johnson), only speak in *Lock, Stock* banter (with Henry doing his best, weirdest London accent). Our protagonist also has to contend with The Prince (Joey King), a schoolgirl with a knack for explosives, and Yuichi (Andrew Koji), a man out to nail the Russian underworld kingpin who put his son in a coma.

Factor in a carriageful of big-name cameos, a dancing Japanese-TV mascot and a vintage jukebox soundtrack and you've got the perfect broad canvas for Leitch to splatter with blood.

Distilling all the cartoon carnage of Leitch's *Deadpool 2*, *Bullet Train* gives the director another chance to mix pop comedy with beautifully over-stylised violence, always seeming most comfortable whenever anyone has a gun

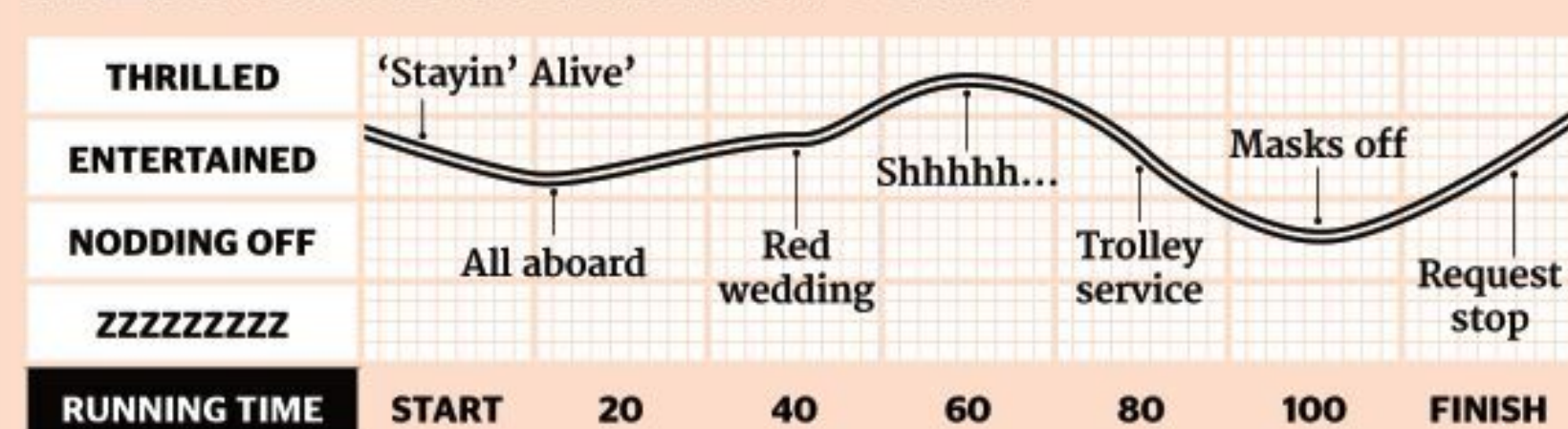
or a knife or some deadly skin-melting snake venom in their hand.

Less at home with the actual story, the film is both fast and flabby. On the one hand, it serves up endless twists for about half an hour longer than is necessary. On the other, it clutters the track with too many narrative signposts. Ending up in a CG mess that tries to say something about karma, *Bullet Train* isn't the *Pulp Fiction* on rails it thinks it is.

What it is, though, is a whole dollop of fun. Buoyed by Leitch's expert eye for action as well as one of the most hilariously disposable A-list casts around, the film has Friday night written all over it. Come for the big sprawling crime thriller; stay for Brad Pitt playing with a toilet before taking someone out with a bottle of mineral water. **PAUL BRADSHAW**

THE VERDICT Too many twists and tropes to let it sneak into first class, but the mix of cast, comedy and carnage ensure a zippy, enjoyable ride.

FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™





GIRLS CAN'T SURF TBC
★★★★★ OUT 19 AUGUST
CINEMAS

Charting the rise of boundary-breaking female surfers from the 1980s to the modern day, Christopher Nelius' documentary is a celebration of both their activism and extraordinary board skills, capturing their fight to be accepted as equals in the sport. Nelius' mixture of archive footage and talking heads conjures a startling contrast: a surf culture divided between swaggering male egos and dedicated female athletes, whose own battles with eating disorders, domestic violence, homophobia and sexism form an affecting swell of universal experience.

TIM COLEMAN



FREE CHOL SOO LEE TBC
★★★★★ OUT 19 AUGUST
CINEMAS

A sensitive take on a truly sad story of injustice, Julie Ha and Eugene Yi's documentary tells the astounding story of a Korean immigrant sentenced to life in prison in 1970s San Francisco for a murder he didn't commit. Amazingly, the campaign to free Chol Soo Lee gathered considerable steam; the film's nimble use of archive and fresh interviews shows how. Examining the prejudices faced by the Asian-American community, it's an important cinematic account, though the tragic tinge of Lee's later life will leave you feeling more despairing than elated.

JAMES MOTTRAM



GLORIOUS TBC
★★★★★ OUT 18 AUGUST
SHUDDER

After losing his trousers to an all-night bender (we've all been there), Wes (Ryan Kwanten) takes refuge in a public bathroom. There, he encounters a disembodied voice hiding behind a cubicle glory hole. As the faceless entity, J.K. Simmons is surprisingly down-tempo, but Kwanten (*True Blood*) counterbalances with a frantic performance worthy of an *Evil Dead* sequel. While the single-location setting loses its novelty before long, director Rebekah McKendry keeps things lively with lots of gore, endless pee-and-poop gags and a demented finale.

JOEL HARLEY



DC LEAGUE OF SUPER-PETS PG
★★★★★ OUT NOW CINEMAS

This lively-if-limited animation sees Superman's (John Krasinski) faithful hound Krypto (Dwayne Johnson) and other powered-up pets join forces against Lulu (Kate McKinnon), a guinea pig with world domination on her mind. A stellar voice cast (Keanu Reeves' grouchy Batman is a standout), snappy pop-culture nods and funky soundtrack all add up to 106 minutes of furry fun. But with a witty first half giving way to a decidedly more wham-bam second – not to mention the myriad characters careering around Metropolis – it never feels quite as heartfelt as you'd hope for.

JAMES MOTTRAM



Fuhrman, now 13 years older, reprises her role as Leena, now a few years younger...

ORPHAN: FIRST KILL TBC

Esther the devil you know...

★★★★★ OUT 19 AUGUST CINEMAS

Directed by *Black Adam*'s Jaume Collet-Serra, the original *Orphan* (2009) was an ordinary thriller with a better-than-average twist that earned solid returns at the box office and a degree of cultdom. William Brent Bell's (*The Boy*) belated prequel plunges us into the backstory of master-of-disguise killer Leena (Isabelle Fuhrman), a homicidal adult with a hormonal condition that makes her look like a child.

Having escaped from an Estonian asylum, she pretends to be the missing daughter of rich Americans Katie (Julia Stiles) and Richard (Rossif Sutherland). The unlikelihood of anyone mistaking a vodka-swilling murderer with a sub-*Killing Eve* accent for their own long-lost kid is repeatedly acknowledged by the script. "If I didn't know any better, I'd think you'd never been here before," muses gullible artist Richard as he shows Leena his studio. "This is insane," offers spoilt teenage son Gunnar (Matthew Finlan). Well, yes.

Luckily for viewers, if not Leena, something slightly more interesting is afoot. Not that you'd know it from the glum first hour. With its chilly Connecticut backdrop and distant performances – all served with a side order of ableist insults – it's a hard film to enjoy on its own terms. Indeed, it's only in the last act, when both sides engage in a murderous battle of wills, that it strikes the right note of pulp preposterousness. But by then, alas, it's all much too late. **MATT GLASBY**

THE VERDICT By skewing far too serious, this tardy sequel seriously misses the point.

LUCK

PG

Reversals of fortune...

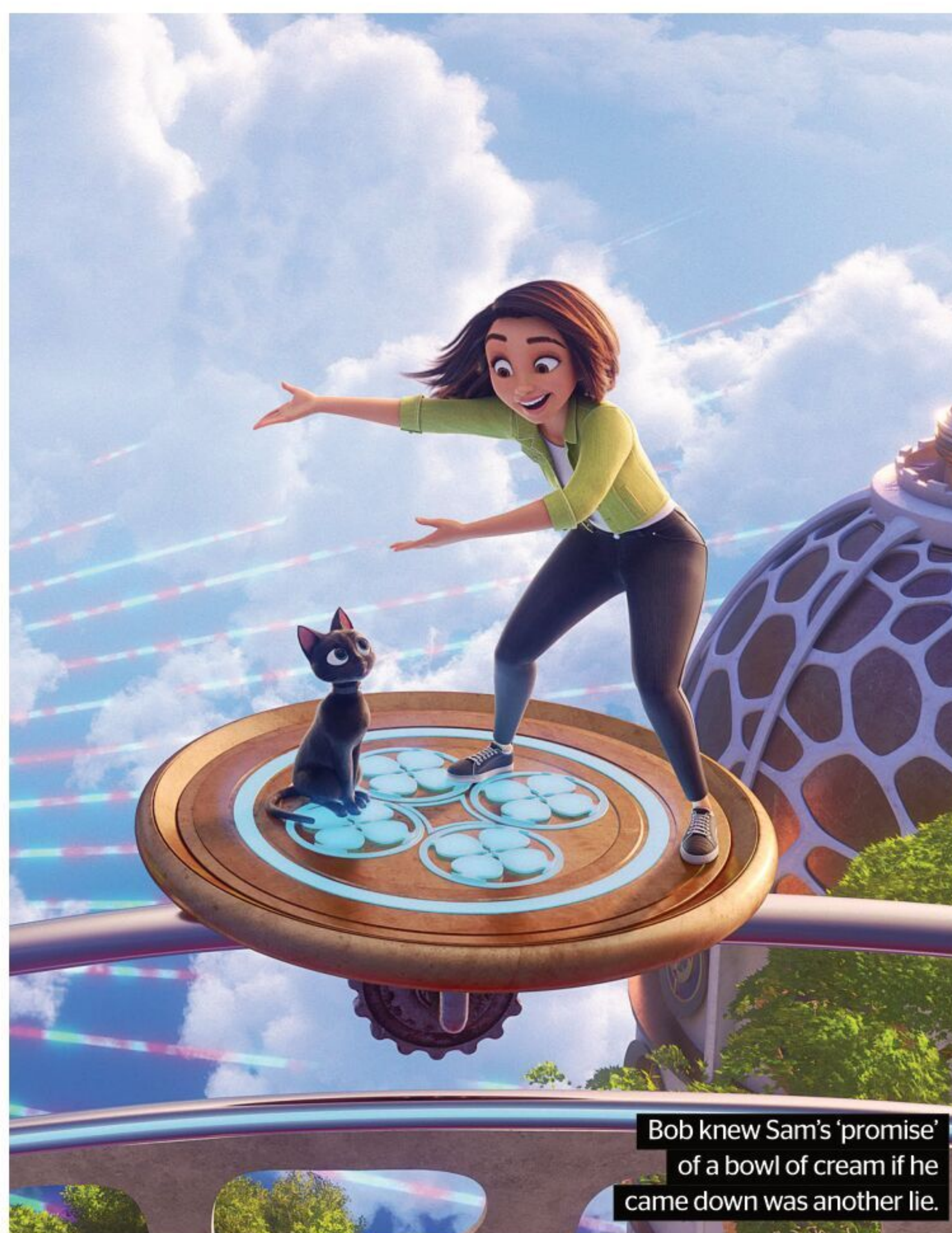
★★★★★ OUT NOW APPLE TV+

Directed by Disney veteran Peggy Holmes, the first film produced by the newly formed Skydance Animation pools talent with experience across the Mouse House, DreamWorks and Pixar. So it's probably no fluke that this family adventure is imaginative and snappily written – albeit somewhat erratic too.

The perpetually unlucky Sam Greenfield (Eva Noblezada) sees her fortune change when she finds a lucky penny that changes her life. But after losing it again, she falls down a magic portal while chasing mysterious black cat Bob (voiced by Simon Pegg, with an aggressively Scottish accent). There, she discovers a beguiling world where both good and bad luck are manufactured and distributed to the people of Earth; a world populated by leprechauns, goblins and one scene-stealing unicorn, all led by dragon Babe (Jane Fonda).

The mission to find another lucky penny allows Bob to give Sam – and the viewer – a tour of the land. Though the plot lends itself to time-sensitive forward momentum, things tend to stall with each new needlessly complicated explanation about the mechanics of how luck really works. Still, extremes of fortune and misfortune fuel a streak of quick-fire sight gags throughout. And with a heart-toasting message about family at the story's core, this is an entertaining, at times very funny yarn that won't ruin your day. **MATT LOOKER**

THE VERDICT The storytelling stutters, but solid world-building, sweet sentiment and a few LOLs ensure that *Luck* brings the charm.



Bob knew Sam's 'promise' of a bowl of cream if he came down was another lie.

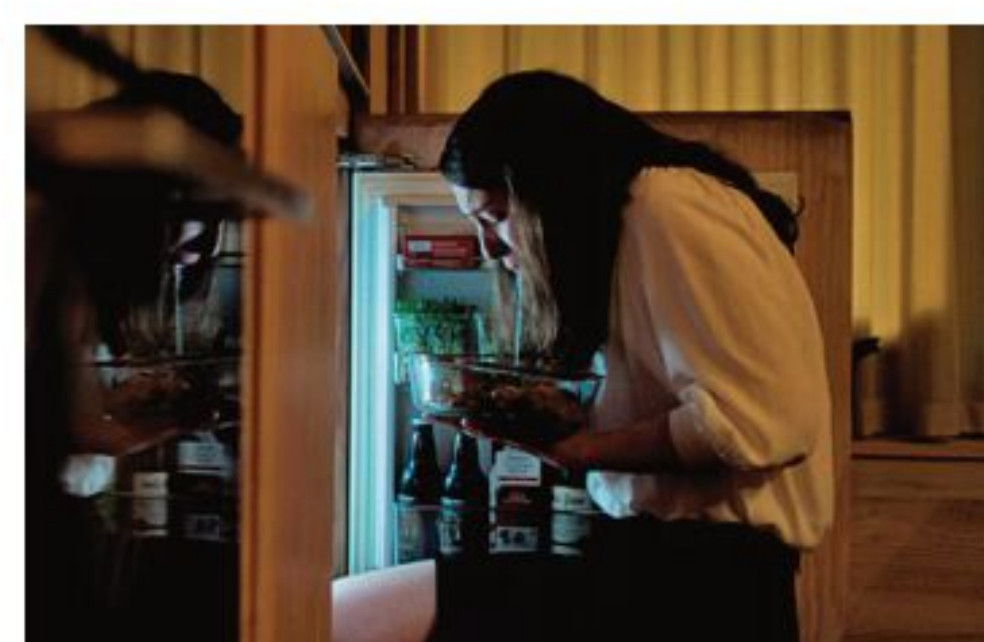


WHEN I CONSUME YOU

TBC

★★★★★ OUT NOW DIGITAL

Shot through with scuzzy naturalism, the latest lo-fi horror from writer/director/cinematographer Perry Blackshear (*They Look Like People*) follows skid-row siblings Wilson (Evan Dumouchel) and Daphne (Libby Ewing) as they try to get their lives on track after embracing sobriety. Problem is, there's a demon stalking them through the freezing Brooklyn backstreets... but is it real? With its moody score, moving performances and twitchy, panicky energy, the film keeps us guessing, impressing both as a grown-up chiller and a study of the aftershocks of addiction. **MATT GLASBY**



THE FEAST

IS

★★★★★ OUT 19 AUGUST CINEMAS

Lee Haven Jones' Welsh-language eco-horror stars Annes Elwy (*The Toll*) as Cadi, a young woman serving a wealthy family during a dinner party at their Snowdonia home. But as they try to cajole a local landowner into accepting a business deal, it becomes clear that the help's demeanour belies murderous intent... This slow-cooked horror is a predictable if well-shot exercise in watching privileged people get their gruesome comeuppance. There's some catharsis in that, but when violence belatedly erupts – some of it memorably nasty – the first casualty, sadly, is logic.

CHRIS SCHILLING



THAT WAS A SERIOUS PARTY

IS

★★★★★ OUT NOW DIGITAL

Before its 2017 demise, Huntingdon's Secret Garden Party held an off-piste niche in boutique British music festivals, loved for the tripped-out 'experience' as much as the bands. Revived for 2022, the bucolic bonanza is celebrated in Dylan Harvey's doc, a surface-level near-promo-piece celebration that – nonetheless – still captures some of the shindig's multi-hued appeal. Tender tributes to lost contributors fulfil the serious remit, while 'down the rabbit hole' silliness is also gamely indulged: if performative wax-strip fighting and butt-naked mud-wrestling tempt, get in on the secret here. **KEVIN HARLEY**



BOTH SIDES OF THE BLADE

TBC

★★★★★ OUT 9 SEPTEMBER CINEMAS, CURZON HOME CINEMA

Claire Denis won Best Director at this year's Berlinale for this drama, which brings together French icons Vincent Lindon and Juliette Binoche on screen for the first time. They play Parisian couple Jean and Sara, whose marriage is rocked when Sara's ex – and Jean's friend – François (Grégoire Colin) re-enters their lives. Dominated by grainy close-ups – at times, you'll feel like you're in bed with these characters – *Blade* treats mid-life passions with care. However, too many dialogue-heavy scenes make for a dry affair of the heart.

JAMES MOTTRAM



AKILLA'S ESCAPE TBC
 ★★★★★ OUT 26 AUGUST
 CINEMAS

Flitting between modern-day Toronto and '90s New York, Charles Officer's crime drama takes on a lot, touching on everything from Jamaican politics to drug culture to urban gangs across North America. Akilla (Thamela Mpumlwana) is a 15-year-old learning hard life lessons from his gang-leader dad (Ronnie Rowe). Meanwhile, young Sheppard (also Mpumlwana) finds himself caught in a parallel web in Toronto; the two threads later intersect, with explosive results. Great performances and beautiful lensing, but *Escape* is let down by a predictable, slightly plodding final act. **LEILA LATIF**



ANAÏS IN LOVE TBC
 ★★★★★ OUT 19 AUGUST
 CINEMAS, DIGITAL

Exuding natural ease, actor Anaïs Demoustier carries every frame of writer/director Charline Bourgeois-Tacquet's alluring romantic drama. Anaïs (the character) is a 30-year-old whose carefree aura masks her rootless, tail-chasing existence. Entering into an affair with married older man Daniel (Denis Podalydès), she becomes enraptured by his writer wife Emilie (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi), casting him off in pursuit of this new, elusive object of desire. Yes, it's another French love-triangle yarn, but with beats you won't expect, told in a way that is – to quote one character – “ardent, vibrant and sincere”. **ERLINGUR EINARSSON**



WHAT JOSIAH SAW TBC
 ★★★★★ OUT NOW SHUDDER

This brooding Southern Gothic follows a small family as they weigh up selling the family farm to an oil corporation. Robert Patrick is on fine form as the clan's ageing but still imposing patriarch Josiah, a sullen and menacing presence who casts a tall shadow over the film's four chapters. Director Vincent Grashaw cranks the story out slowly, mirroring the tortured characters in grim atmospherics and a corrupted farmland setting. Whatever Josiah did see, audiences will have to squint through the murky cinematography to catch a glimpse for themselves. **JOEL HARLEY**



HER WAY IS
 ★★★★★ OUT 26 AUGUST
 CINEMAS, CURZON HOME CINEMA

Writer/director Cécile Ducrocq's engaging drama centres on single mother and sex worker Marie (Laure Calamy) as she struggles to raise the funds to pay for her feckless son Adrien (Nissim Renard) to attend a prestigious cookery school. Although refreshingly sex-positive, *Her Way*'s portrayal of Marie's work feels a little too sanitised, while the persistently surly Adrien is hard to warm to. However, a terrific, committed Calamy makes it impossible not to root for Marie, whose determination and optimism in the face of hardship prove quietly heartbreaking. **CHRIS SCHILLING**



Alan had been kept in detention for a long time.

MY OLD SCHOOL 15
 Blazer of glory...

★★★★★ OUT 19 AUGUST CINEMAS

Everyone remembers someone from school who never quite fit in. In director Jono McLeod's case, it was a classmate called Brandon Lee, a transfer student from Canada who – in addition to sharing the name of Bruce Lee's deceased actor son – was so bright, assured and dapper he was initially mistaken for a teacher by pupils and staff alike.

How Brandon came to be a pupil at Bearsden Academy in early '90s Glasgow would become the stuff of outlandish urban legend. It's best to go into McLeod's documentary feature debut, then, knowing as little as possible about its subject, if only to appreciate the creative ways the film finds to revisit it.

Lee himself declined to appear on camera for this film, so his words are skilfully lip-synced by acting icon Alan Cumming: it makes for a curious out-of-body device that seems entirely fitting for a story reliant on deceit and pretence. And while some footage exists of Brandon in situ – notably of him appearing in a school production of *South Pacific* – McLeod generally uses interviews with his peers and retro animation to fill in the blanks: a neat way both to evoke a *Grange Hill* vibe of uniform-clad hijinks and to keep Lee's secrets tantalisingly under wraps.

They say you can never go back. What *My Old School* proves, though, is that there's nothing to stop you trying. **NEIL SMITH**

THE VERDICT A real-life case of bizarre imposture is entertainingly exhumed in this engaging Scot-doc.



CAMPING TRIP TBC
★★★★★ OUT NOW DIGITAL

Following the first Covid lockdown, a group of friends make a break for the American wilds in order to reconnect with each other as well as themselves. Our campers are far from civilisation and cell reception – but all too close to a botched crime deal that sets a killer on the loose... Remixing *Shallow Grave* with a dollop of *Deliverance* thrown in, this English-language debut from brothers Demian and Leonardo Fuica is attractively shot and scored. Which makes it such a shame that the performances and writing fall short, making for a trip that winds up as a bit of a wash-out.

TIM COLEMAN



DRAGON BALL SUPER: SUPER HERO TBC
★★★★★ OUT 19 AUGUST CINEMAS

Penned by series creator Akira Toriyama, this new entry in the sprawling *Dragon Ball* franchise is a nostalgic return to the show's early eras (despite a first-time use of 3D animation). Themes of fatherhood and mentor-student relationships are explored as alien warrior Piccolo and original hero Goku's son Gohan face off against a resurrected Red Ribbon Army. The story is relatively lightweight and newcomers may still be left confounded, but long-term fans will enjoy the many throwbacks and customary epic rage attacks. Available in subbed and dubbed versions. **MATT LOOKER**



"Ah, so it's you who nicked my sleep mask."

MR. MALCOLM'S LIST TBC
Ten things I rate about you...

★★★★★ OUT 26 AUGUST CINEMAS

Expanded from a short she filmed in 2019, Emma Holly Jones' decorous feature debut is a charming Jane Austen pastiche with a multi-racial cast. "Like *Bridgerton*, you mean?" we hear you say. And it's true this Regency romp would feel a lot more original if not for the Netflix phenom that came to dominate our viewing during lockdown.

In its own, more modest fashion, however, *Mr. Malcolm's List* gives the period costumer a similar makeover while keeping its streaming counterpart's steamy sex and bodice-ripping at bay. The result might run out of juice by the end, yet it still provides plenty of reasons to see.

The list of the title refers to an exacting inventory of attributes Şopê Dirisù's eligible bachelor expects a prospective bride to possess. When Zawe Ashton's frivolous Julia is humiliatingly found wanting, she recruits her country-mouse chum Selina (Freida Pinto) to pose as his ideal match. It's not long of course before Selina and Mr. Malcolm are falling in love for real. But how miffed will Mr. M be when he discovers he's being played like a pianoforte?

From its posh frocks to its fancy balls, Jones' adap of Suzanne Allain's novel checks all the right boxes. Shame, then, that it ultimately finds itself too enamoured of its genre to attempt anything genuinely subversive or adventurous. **NEIL SMITH**

THE VERDICT Performances? Sparkling. Script? Droll. Ensemble? Appealingly diverse. Daring? Well, let's not ask for too much...



THE TERRITORY TBC
★★★★★ OUT 2 SEPTEMBER CINEMAS

This Brazilian Sundance Audience Award-winning doc plunges you deep into the heart of the Amazon rainforest. Directed by Alex Pritz, it details the fight between "land grabbers" and the ever-dwindling Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau people. These Indigenous inhabitants – led by charismatic youngster Bitaté – are left clinging to their patch as farmers and illegal settlers encroach upon their protected terrain. Beginning in 2018, just as Jair Bolsonaro takes power, it's an immersive study of politics, activism and environmentalism, laying bare the shocking rate of deforestation. Gritty and disquieting. **JAMES MOTTRAM**



TOMORROW MORNING TBC
★★★★★ OUT 9 SEPTEMBER CINEMAS

The stage version of this rom-musical follows two couples: one about to be wed, the other getting divorced. Only in the second act is it made clear they're the same pair a decade apart, played by different actors. Yet it's a device more interesting than anything else in this dire adaptation, where Samantha Barks and Ramin Karimloo play the bland London couple for the whole duration. It's a lifeless, interminable watch, with lyrics and dialogue that amount to little more than the hardly revelatory message that sometimes marriages don't work out. **JOSH SLATER-WILLIAMS**

VERTIGO, SONY, DOGWOOF, FFP/8CUBE, KALEIDOSCOPE

STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE - THE DIRECTOR'S EDITION PG

Now, V'Ger...

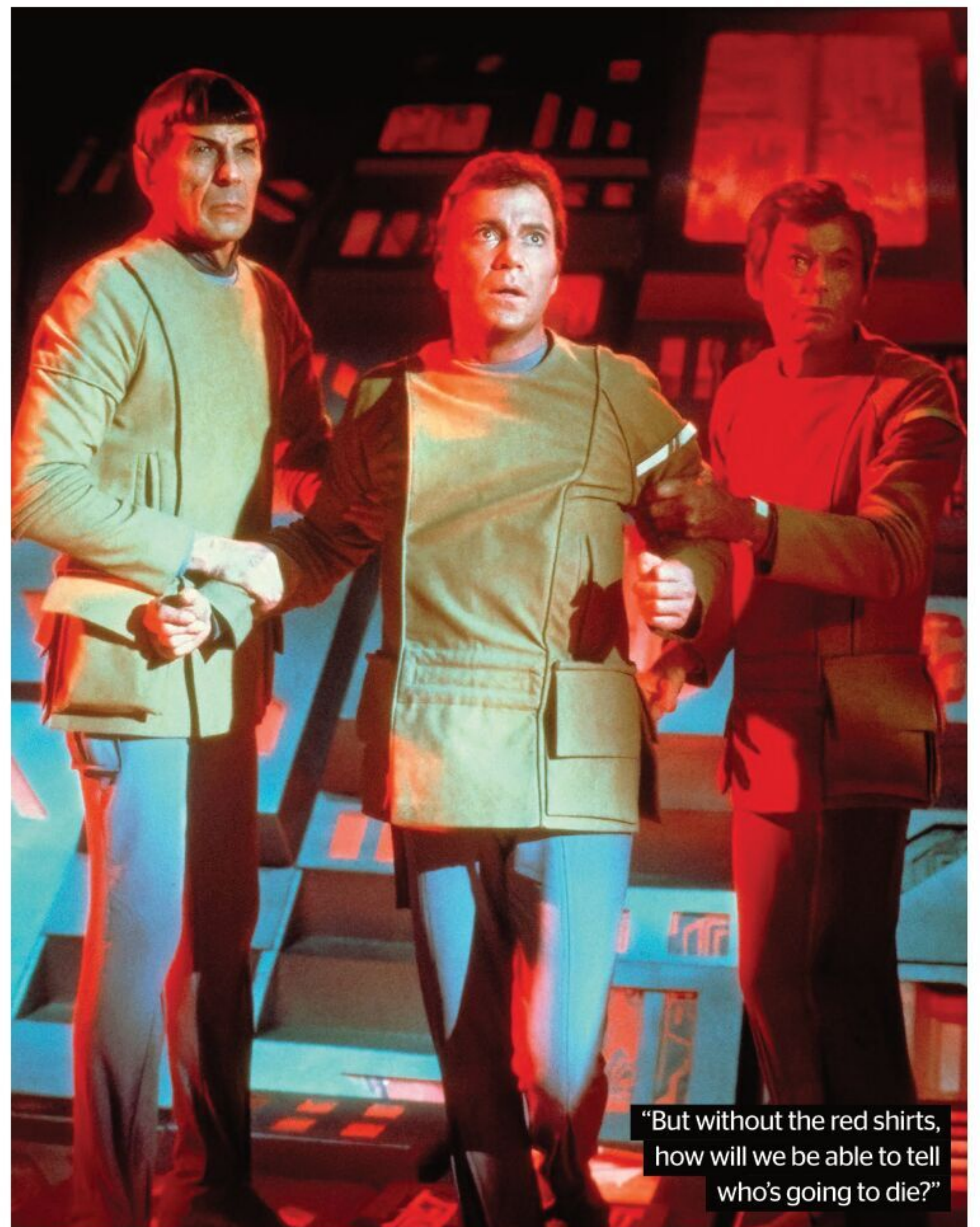
1979 ★★★★★ OUT 19 AUGUST CINEMAS 5 SEP BD, 4K UHD
EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Documentaries, Featurettes, Deleted scenes, Effects/costume tests

A decade after the USS Enterprise's original TV mission was cut short by cancellation, Kirk, Spock and co. returned to ride a new wave of Skywalker-induced space euphoria. Sadly, this slow, serious journey to the final frontier has little in common with the best bits of *Star Trek* – it even jettisons the TV show's iconic primary-coloured uniforms in favour of a bland, pastel-heavy pyjama party.

Now promoted to admiral, James T. Kirk (William Shatner) quits his desk job to lead Earth's defence against an unstoppable robotic intelligence known as V'Ger. The plot – borrowing heavily from original series episode 'The Changeling' and a script for abandoned TV spin-off *Phase II* – aims for the cerebral edge of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, but leaves all the fun behind in Spacedock.

But whichever version you're watching, *The Motion Picture* looks spectacular. *The Sound Of Music* director Robert Wise was always an unlikely choice to helm *Trek*'s big-screen debut but, in league with *Close Encounters* VFX guru Douglas Trumbull, he turned the Enterprise into a work of art. In fact, it's never looked better. **RICHARD EDWARDS**

THE VERDICT Ambitious and visually stunning – but *Trek*'s movie career didn't ignite until *The Wrath Of Khan*.



"But without the red shirts, how will we be able to tell who's going to die?"



The 1983 fashion catalogues had a frankly impressive variety of brown.

THE BIG CHILL 15

Friends in need...

1983 ★★★★★ OUT 29 AUGUST BD
EXTRAS ★★★★★ Documentary, Featurette, Deleted scenes, Booklet

Whether it's nostalgia talking or not, the film that critics once loved to hate holds up better than it should. Sure, many complaints stick: too privileged, too slick... But director Lawrence Kasdan's quarter-life-crisis ensemble piece cuts into the muddle of adult lives keenly, giving form to flux.

"Sometimes it's hard to believe that the Good Lord had a plan," says a priest as seven friends gather for the funeral of an eighth number (played by Kevin Costner – or his limbs, at least). Former radicals now grappling with kids, careers, impotence and otherwise, these boomers understand the priest's observation: as they reflect on disappointment, despair and more, the sense that life isn't unfolding to plan resonates.

Smartly cast, the leads tease finessed character studies from the shores of self-indulgence: notably, Jeff Goldblum's glib writer resembles his later career in microcosm. Glenn Close, William Hurt, Tom Berenger, Kevin Kline and Meg Tilly also excel in a cast whose groomed fronts bely underlying turmoil. Kasdan and Barbara Benedek's script meticulously sustains that sense of irresolution in reflections on creative ambitions stalled by parenthood, or on the suicide note that never got written. Kasdan gives adult compromise a human face, all the way to a spot-on finale: a conversation plays on over the credits, loose ends dangling. Criterion's extras include an essay by Lena Dunham. **KEVIN HARLEY**

THE VERDICT As insightful as it was influential, Kasdan's dramedy captures unresolved lives with sharp-eyed precision.

EVENT HORIZON¹⁸

Sight-mare scenario...

1997 ★★★★★ OUT NOW DUAL FORMAT

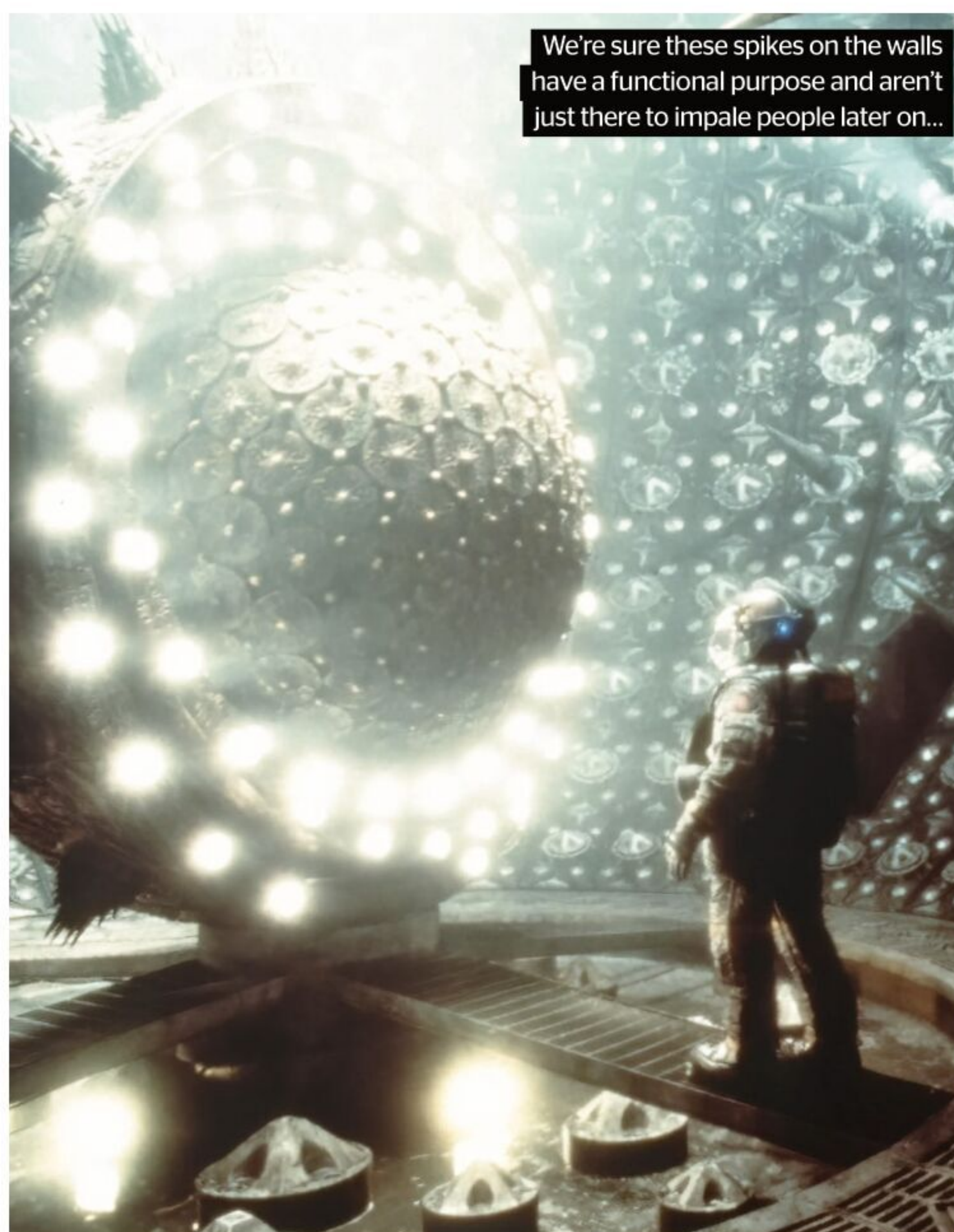
EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Making Of, Featurettes, Deleted scenes, Memorabilia

A flop on its original cinema release 25 years ago, Paul W.S. Anderson's film reemerged on video as a cult favourite. It's withstood the barrage of time with a grace belying the brutal scars of both its characters and its own tortured, rushed birth.

Written by Philip Eisner (*Mutant Chronicles*), the plot sees Captain Miller's (Laurence Fishburne) space-rescue squad escort Dr. William Weir (Sam Neill, on forceful, peak-horror form) to a Gothic creation that wears its influences with pride. An experimental interstellar ship with an artificial black hole for an engine, gone for seven years, is back, with a new (ahem) life force on board. This mysterious (double ahem) alien presence starts to torment each crew member via visions of their individual haunted pasts.

As its magnificently overqualified cast hurtles down corridors filled with jump scares, high-tension dread, meat-grinder-like magnetic fields and blood-soaked mutilations, *Event Horizon*'s sheer velocity offsets its BTS compromises. Plot points are dropped, and the promise of a "world beyond our universe" goes unfulfilled (though the masterful production design offers ample compensation). However, those scars have become part of the film's charm, a fact dissected among the abundant (albeit not new) extras in this 4K UHD Steelbook release. **ERLINGUR EINARSSON**

THE VERDICT Flawed but audacious, *Event Horizon* is as magnetic as ever. Still Paul W.S. Anderson's finest hour.



TENEBRAE¹⁸

1982 ★★★★★ OUT NOW

DUAL FORMAT

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Documentary, Featurettes, Intro, Alt US cut, Booklet, Memorabilia

Inspired by a real-life stalking experience of his own, Dario Argento's hypnotic giallo explores his usual preoccupations – sex, death and the dangers of art – in high style. On a book tour of Rome, thriller author Peter Neal (Anthony Franciosa) finds himself at the mercy of a copycat killer, outraged critics and a coterie of lovers. But which of them will finish him off first? Cue plenty of transgressive thrills. Arrow's lavish release includes 4K and Blu versions, and enough special features to satisfy the most ardent fan. **MATT GLASBY**



FLATLINERS¹⁵

1990 ★★★★★ OUT NOW BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentary, Featurettes, Gallery, Booklet

Jokingly dubbed *St. Elmo's Funeral* by Kiefer Sutherland, this spooky tale of med students who induce their own deaths to glimpse the afterlife hasn't aged as well as the likes of Kevin Bacon and Julia Roberts have. Yet the late Joel Schumacher's chiller remains an entertaining treatise on scientific hubris that was technically accomplished enough to earn it an Oscar nod for sound FX editing. Production designer Eugenio Zanetti, composer James Newton Howard and DoP Jan de Bont all feature in the accompanying bundle of (new) interviews.

NEIL SMITH



THE SWIMMER PG

1968 ★★★★★ OUT 29 AUGUST BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentary, Short story, Gallery, Booklet, Poster

Like *Mad Men* via *The Twilight Zone*, director Frank Perry's bracing, surreal curio dives into the murky waters of middle-class male crisis. Dismantling his machismo from within, Burt Lancaster plays Ned Merrill, a middle-aged suburbanite on a curious odyssey back home through Connecticut's swimming pools. An allegorical character study surfaces from his encounters with locals, hinting at personal delusion and a more metaphorical despair. Between the horror-grade twist and haunting Marvin Hamlisch score, the result evokes a generation's lost purpose with deep-end power. **KEVIN HARLEY**



LARKS ON A STRING¹⁵

1969 ★★★★★ OUT NOW BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentary, Featurettes, Short film, Booklet

Banned for two decades by Communist authorities in Czechoslovakia upon its completion in 1969, Jiri Menzel's episodic gem is set in the scrapyards of an early-'50s steel-processing plant. Undergoing 're-education', a group of bourgeois dissidents find themselves working next to a group of lively female prisoners... Highlighting the gulf between official rhetoric and the realities of everyday life under a Stalinist regime, Menzel (*Closely Observed Trains*) deftly blends political satire and romantic comedy to enjoyably subversive effect. Comprehensive extras. **TOM DAWSON**

**HELL HIGH** 18

1989 ★★★★★ OUT NOW BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Intro, Alt opening, Featurettes, Deleted scene, Booklet

After a strikingly spiky opening, Douglas Grossman's low-budget horror settles down into the kind of horny high-school hijinks seen in *Porky's*. Led astray by the sadistic Dickens (Christopher Stryker), good kid Jon-Jon (Christopher Cousins) joins in a prank on their troubled teacher Miss Storm (Maureen Mooney). Unfortunately for all concerned, not least the viewer, the goofy fun sours with the emergence of a jarring rape-revenge plot. Decent extras include candid interviews with Grossman and Cousins, who's cheerfully surprised the film was released at all. **MATT GLASBY**

**RED ROCK WEST** 15

1993 ★★★★★ OUT 22 AUGUST BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentary, Featurettes, Booklet, Poster

John Dahl's neo-noir western debuted on cable in the US and video in the UK, but soon became a cult favourite for its ingenious plotting, subversive black humour and cool-kooks cast: Nicolas Cage, J.T. Walsh, Dennis Hopper, *Twin Peaks*' Lara Flynn Boyle... The corkscrew plot takes in a fake hitman, a corrupt sheriff, a real hitman and a wife who's both wronged and femme fatale, with characters (and viewers) trapped in a looping nightmare. Dahl's next film after *Red Rock West* – also released to cable and video – was *The Last Seduction*.

JAMIE GRAHAM**DOG SOLDIERS** 15

2002 ★★★★★ OUT 22 AUGUST BD, 4K UHD, DUAL FORMAT

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Making Of, Featurettes, Short film, Deleted scenes, Gag reel, Gallery

Twenty years on, Neil Marshall's hammy creature-feature debut holds up a lot better than every movie he's directed since (bar *The Descent*). To that we can attribute the lean simplicity of its squaddies vs. werewolves scenario, the laddish gusto of his game cast and the way its tongue is kept firmly in cheek. Newly restored from the original camera negative, this 20th-anniversary reissue comes with new interviews, three commentaries and Marshall's 1999 short *Combat*. It also throws in a history of lycanthropy. **NEIL SMITH**

**MONSTER** 18

2003 ★★★★★ OUT NOW BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentary, Featurettes, Deleted scenes, Booklet, Art cards

"I generally think the reason it got made is because it was a T&A lesbian serial killer movie starring Charlize Theron and Christina Ricci," claims writer/director Patty Jenkins (*Wonder Woman*) of her feature debut in one of the many extras (new and old) assembled for this long-overdue Blu-ray release. Thankfully, the filmmaker had a more nuanced and insightful vision for her true-crime biopic of sex worker-turned-killer Aileen Wuornos, one that finds its perfect outlet in Theron's painfully raw and ultimately Oscar-winning performance. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

**THE MUMMY/FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL** PG/15**Please Hammer, don't hurt 'em...**

1959/1974 ★★★★★ OUT 29 AUGUST BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Featurettes, Galleries, Booklets, Art cards

This pair of feature-packed Hammer horror re-releases captures the studio's changing fortunes as Britain's premier purveyor of cinematic shocks.

Following *The Curse Of Frankenstein* (1957) and *Dracula* (1958), *The Mummy* (1959) was Hammer's third go at injecting fresh blood into a vintage Universal horror property. Despite an awkward script – a mash-up of Universal's *The Mummy* (1930) and *The Mummy's Hand* (1942) – there's plenty here for genre junkies to savour, not least the lurid Eastmancolor photography and the chance to see Peter Cushing and a bandage-wrapped Christopher Lee going toe-to-toe again.

Terence Fisher's *Frankenstein And The Monster From Hell* sees the studio in decline and out of step with contemporary horror cinema. True, there's fun to be had in this grisly romp, centred on Cushing's batty Baron continuing his experiments within the confines of an insane asylum. But the film looks hopelessly old-fashioned compared with the likes of *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), a situation not helped by hokey special effects, including Frankenstein's latest creation, best summed up as Bigfoot in joggers. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

THE VERDICT The films may not be Hammer's very best, but fans will have a hell of a time with these handsome packages.



Katz him if you can! Omri Katz and co-star Justin Shenkarow unravel a mystery in *Eerie, Indiana*.

CLASSIC TV EERIE, INDIANA

Even stranger things...

1991-92 AVAILABLE ON DVD

Something spooky was in the air in the '90s. The debut of *Twin Peaks* at the start of the decade had opened the door for the weird, the surreal and the unexplained to invade TV screens across the US, leading to the likes of *The X-Files*, *American Gothic*, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, *Baywatch Nights*(!) and, of course, *Eerie, Indiana*.

The brainchild of writer José Rivera and producer Karl Schaefer, *Eerie, Indiana* follows the adventures of teenager Marshall Teller (Omri Katz), whose family have recently moved to the titular "centre of weirdness for the entire planet". It's the kind of place where you might see Bigfoot digging around in your trash, meet a mother who keeps her children young by sealing them in Tupperware, or learn that your life is really a TV series – and you're about to be written out. Marshall's biggest problem? Outside of his best friend, Simon Holmes (Justin Shenkarow), nobody believes him.

"It was the junior *X-Files* before there was *The X-Files*," says Joe Dante, who served as creative consultant on the show. Fresh from helming the subversive *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990), the filmmaker also directed five episodes, including the pilot, enabling him to set the show's cinematic aesthetic, which others would follow.

Typical of Dante's filmography, the series was also loaded with nods and winks to classic sci-fi and horror films, all of which would fly over the heads of what network bosses at NBC saw as *Eerie, Indiana*'s target audience. "It was considered a kids' show, even though it never really was. For us it was an adult show with kid protagonists," claims series co-creator Schaefer.

Shown at 7pm on Sunday nights opposite CBS' news and current affairs behemoth *60 Minutes*, the show was a hit with critics, but failed to find an audience and was cancelled after just 18 episodes (with one more in the can, though unbroadcast at the time). A repeat run in 1997 fared better and sparked interest in bringing the show back. Instead, the following year saw the release of quickly forgotten spin-off show *Eerie, Indiana: The Other Dimension*, a pale imitation of the original.

While rumours of an *Eerie, Indiana* reboot continue to this day, perhaps the true bearer of the show's legacy lives on elsewhere. Specifically, Netflix smash *Stranger Things*, with its young protagonists investigating the uncanny and inexplicable in a small-town setting rife with childhood fears and genre nostalgia. Call it an *Eerie* coincidence...

ANTON VAN BEEK



'HEART ON A CHAIN', 1991
Future scream queen Danielle Harris co-stars in this moving tale of a young girl in need of a heart transplant, whose personality changes after receiving the heart of a rebellious schoolboy who died in a tragic accident. Is she simply acting out? Or does her former admirer's spirit live on within her...?



CHANNEL 4

EXTRAS



COLLECTIBLES

BLACK ADAM FUNKO POP!

OUT TBC

Change the hierarchy of power in your personal universe with these new vinyl figures based on this month's cover film (see p34). If you're going big – bigger, we should say – there's Black Adam on his throne or Hawkman in his Hawk-cruiser. Other members of the Justice Society are also available, as is a lightning-wielding BA. Teth your pick at funkoeurope.com.



VARIOUS

HOUSE OF THE DRAGON MERCHANDISE

OUT NOW

If your 'Winter Is Coming' fleece is looking a bit tatty, or a neighbour has permanently borrowed your 'I Drink And I Know Things' tankard, good news. You can turn your home into a literal *House Of The Dragon* thanks to a ton of new merch, bedecked with crowns, scaly eyes and signature show quote 'Dreams didn't make us kings, dragons did'. There are even Targaryen tote bags to pop it all in. Flap on over to shop.warnerbros.co.uk.



VARIOUS

DC LEAGUE OF SUPER-PETS MERCHANDISE

OUT NOW

Toys, t-shirts, accessories... there's even stuff designed for humans amid the bumper range of *Pets* products. But our tails are wagging at super-speed for the animal-aimed items, which include squeaky plushies, collars, leashes and rope toys featuring iconic emblems ripe for multiple maulings. Take a walk(ies) over to shop.warnerbros.co.uk.

COLLECTIBLE/TOY

ANDOR: AMBUSH ON FERRIX LEGO

OUT NOW

We know the new *Star Wars* show (see p50) isn't the *Andor* the road for the *Rogue One* hero. But it looks like he'll be getting into some tight spots if this hardware-heavy set's anything to go by. That's Stellan Skarsgård's Luthen Rael catching a lift with Cassian, whose nemesis Syril Karn pilots a menacing Mobile Tac-Pod. Opening top and side, adjustable wings and a rotating double stud shooter, you say? Nice one, Syril. Full speeder ahead to Lego.com.

MATTHEW LEYLAND





Flesh and blood-pumping...



THOR: LOVE & THUNDER

★★★★★

Ragnarok-ish synth flutters aside, Michael Giacchino/Nami Melumad bring symphonic grandeur to their *Thor 4* score, complemented with wily wit and wild-haired guitar. Thundery chorales boost the ceremonial sensibility, though Gorr's theme can't match the Thors' combined cues for clout; on-brand or not, his butchered melody just doesn't stick. But acoustic-guitar breaks, Maurice Jarre-ish fanfares and Valhalla-calling rock-outs max the score's colours, before mighty end-suite 'The Ballad Of Love And Thunder' hammers things home exuberantly.



CRIMES OF THE FUTURE

★★★★★

Howard Shore's fertile form holds up for his 16th mind-meld with David Cronenberg. Mirroring Cronenberg's fleshy future vision in hybrids of electro-organic mood pieces, Shore hits a suggestive balance between seamy synthetic soundscapes and queasy chamber symphonies, like Bernard Herrmann revived by Dr. Frankenstein. If the title track's pulsing mystique and the celestial 'First Autopsy' cut deep, 'Klinek's techno tumult kicks in with the certainty of old pros hitting their stride.

CLASSIC SOUNDTRACK DAVID BOWIE

TEN GREAT USES OF THE STARMAN ON SCREEN...

'MOONAGE DAYDREAM'

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY (2014)

With his pelvic sorcery and '70s mixtapes, Star-Lord needs a sprinkling of (Ziggy) Stardust. Bowie's dramatic sci-fi rock-opera-in-five-minutes duly delivers, Mick Ronson's "space face"-melting guitars and all. As the Guardians reach Knowhere, it's indeed time to "freak out".

'LIFE ON MARS?' LICORICE PIZZA (2021)

If any tune can make "a god-awful small affair" feel epic, Bowie's transcendent melodrama-in-song can. Dystopian backdrop, "hooked to the silver screen" strings, kooks-united lyrics: Paul Thomas Anderson's loose-limbed '70s-misfits romance couldn't have chosen better.

'ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS'

ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS (1986)

Scampishly introduced by Bowie at Glastonbury as his "favourite love song of the '80s," the title track to Julien Temple's musical justifies the film's existence. Soulful, sweeping – and sung to soaring perfection.

'CAT PEOPLE (PUTTING OUT FIRE)'

INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS (2009)

Tarantino thought Bowie's grandiose Giorgio Moroder pair-up was underused in 1982's *Cat People* remake. Not so in Tarantino's WW2 flick, where Bowie's ominous lyrics and off-the-scale vocal ("Gas-LEEEEEENE!") blaze with purpose and punch.

'I'M DERANGED' LOST HIGHWAY (1997)

Head-trip electro juggernaut, or warped Bond theme? Either way, soundtrack producer (and Bowie tour-mate) Trent Reznor mobilised a track from Bowie's high-concept 1. *Outside* album to dreamy, delirious effect for David Lynch's fractured noir.

'HEROES'

THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER (2012)

Swallow the idea that anyone wouldn't know the song and Bowie's artful Berlin anthem is "perfect" for *Perks*' joyride. Does Emma Watson's ecstasy miss Bowie's irony? Maybe, but the roof-open tune encourages that particular (mis)reading. See also *Christiane F.* (1981).

'QUEEN BITCH'

THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU (2004)

Even if Seu Jorge's covers dazzle, only the original would do for Bill Murray's slo-mo exit in Wes Anderson's watery wonder. Sassy and "swishy", Bowie's slangy, glammy Velvet Underground homage breaks surface with the right swaggering insouciance.

'MODERN LOVE' FRANCES HA (2012)

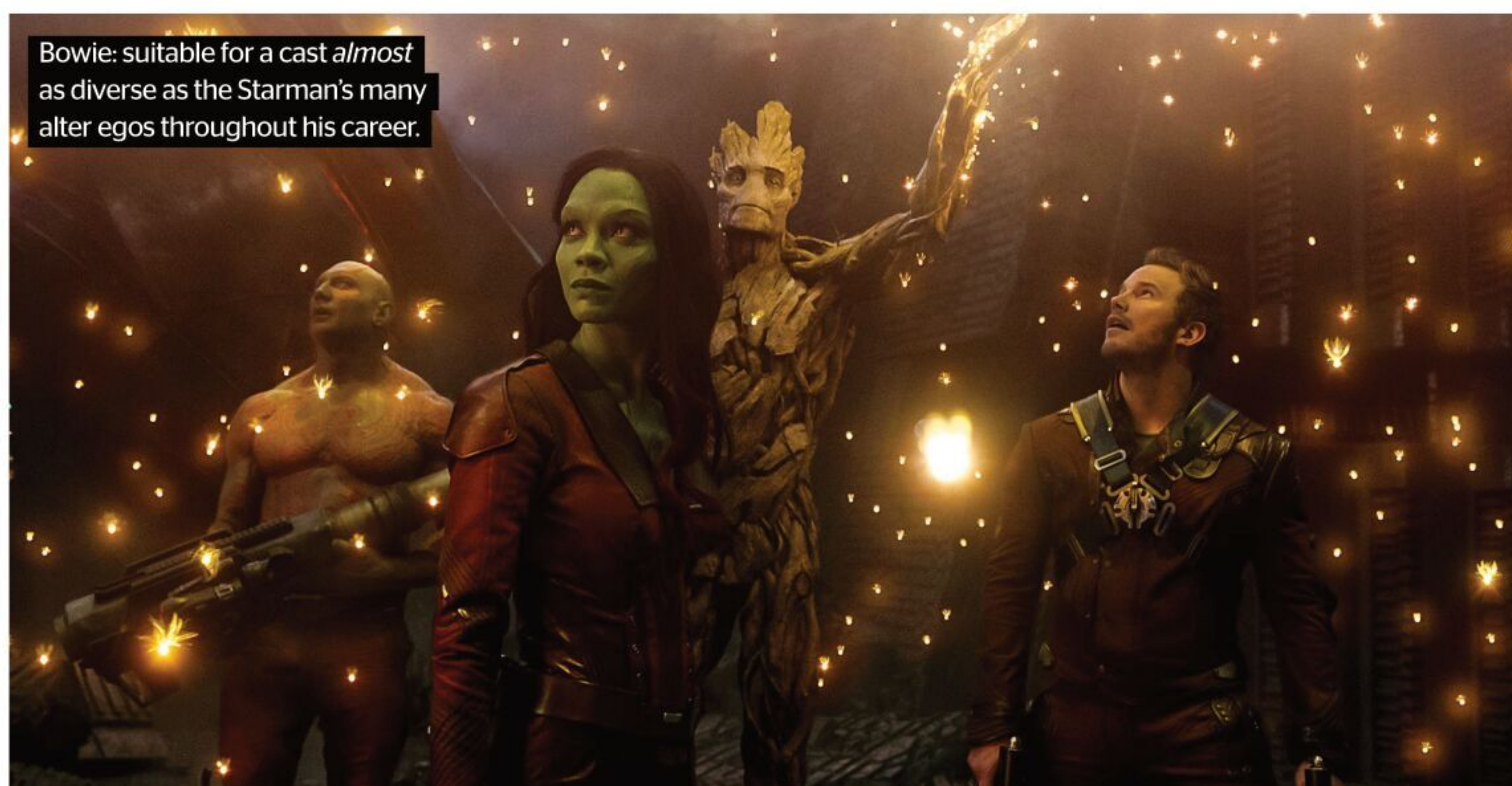
Greta Gerwig skips and dances through Manhattan for dear life in Noah Baumbach's indie hit. Channelling Little Richard's influence, the indelible nihilistic exuberance of Bowie's Nile Rodgers team-up propels her onwards. *Adventureland* and Leo Carax's *Mauvais Sang* also felt the '...Love'.

'THE JEAN GENIE' CONTROL (2007)

Famously, rock photographer Anton Corbijn snapped Bowie in a loincloth in 1980. For his feature debut, Corbijn nails Bowie's influence on Ian Curtis as the Joy Division singer mimes for the mirror to *Aladdin Sane*'s filthy boogie-rocker.

'STARMAN' THE MARTIAN (2015)

Long after filming Bowie in a '60s ice-cream ad, Ridley Scott tapped his greatest hits. While *House Of Gucci* deploys 'Ashes To Ashes', *The Martian*'s Damon-tage uses Ziggy's space-hope all-timer gloriously. Look out your window, you can see his light... **KEVIN HARLEY**



DISNEY, MARVEL MUSIC, INC., DECCA



Recent thumb-twiddlers...



XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 3

★★★★★

OUT NOW SWITCH

Two rival factions of young soldiers, bred for war, join forces in this sprawling RPG that combines the best features of its two predecessors. With six characters fighting at once, combat can get messy, but amid the chaos are thrilling moments of synergy, as pairs of heroes fuse into powerful mechanised forms.

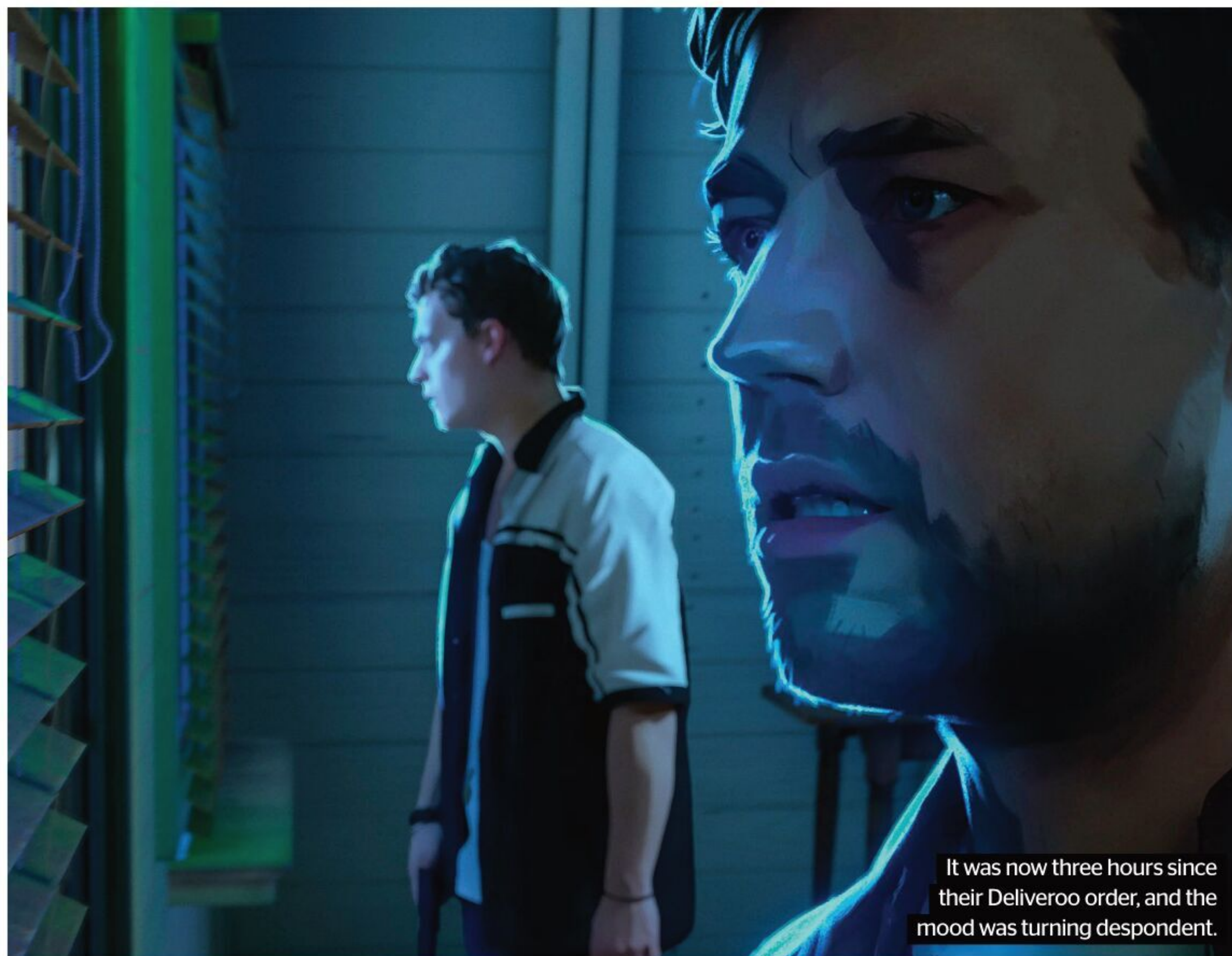


SEVERED STEEL

★★★★★

OUT NOW PS4/5

This stylish, acrobatic shooter casts you as a one-armed assassin, taking down armies of bad guys in pristine, highly destructible facilities. Without the ability to reload, you must instead steal weapons from your enemies; pulling off flips, wall runs and other stunts slows down time to give you the upper hand.



GAMES

AS DUSK FALLS

The family that plays together...

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** PC, XBOX ONE/SERIES S/X

Plenty of modern videogames feature branching narratives, letting player choices shape the story. This ambitious interactive drama adds a fun multiplayer twist, encouraging friends and families to gather around the TV, grab their phones and vote to determine the big decisions.

Rendered in a distinctive motion-comic style which uses painted-over frames of live-action footage, *As Dusk Falls* tracks the fallout from a robbery gone wrong, as the fates of two families collide during a tense motel standoff. A time shift then allows us to explore the repercussions for the survivors 14 years on. Complex stuff, but the game struggles to square away its prestige-TV aspirations with the contrivances of its plotting, the pulpy thrills of its first half giving way to soapy drama in the second.

It begins when schlubby everyman Vince – taking wife Michelle, young daughter Zoe and terminally ill father Jim across the US, seeking a fresh start – is run off the road, and the four are forced to stop at a desert motel while their car is fixed. Meanwhile, after their plan to rob the local sheriff to pay off their father's debts is thwarted, three armed brothers burst in and take the family (and motel owners) hostage. Despite occasional script stumbles, the scenario grips – the knowledge that not everyone

will get out alive ensures the various standoffs crackle with tension, not least when situations suddenly require quick inputs. As Vince, do you play it safe or try to wrestle a gun from an assailant? Should you really trust this seemingly volatile lawman, or are these troubled boys more innocent than they seem?

Frequent flashbacks cleverly flesh out backstories, causing sympathies to shift while delaying the resolution to key cliffhangers. Post-chapter summaries show just how many different branches there are yet to explore on the game's 'story tree', while drawing conclusions about your personal values based on your playstyle and the choices you made. Alas, that feels more psychologically probing than the muddled later chapters. Here, the focus shifts towards Jay, the youngest and most sensitive of the brothers, and eventually Zoe, now 20 and still suffering trauma flashbacks. But with plot taking precedence over character development until the final act, the question *As Dusk Falls* poses – can you really escape the shadows of the past? – is answered in abrupt and unsatisfying fashion. Still, if you're in the mood for a miniseries that requires a bit more effort than just skipping the credits, this offers a couple of evenings' worth of well-acted, sporadically absorbing entertainment. **CHRIS SCHILLING**



Labours of love,
labours of gloves...



THE ART AND SCIENCE OF ARRIVAL

★★★★★
Belated but welcome companion to Denis Villeneuve's 2016 Oscar-nommed stunner by filmmaker (and Villeneuve's other half) Tanya Lapointe, who deciphers the film via on-set anecdotes, thematic analysis and concept art.

MUSANNA AHMED



JAWBONE: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A FILM

★★★★★
This photobook look-back at the 2017 drama is a compelling, passionate portrait of the time, sweat and serendipity that goes into contemporary British indie-making. Contributors include star/writer Johnny Harris, composer Paul Weller and boxing consultant/legend Barry McGuigan.

JOEL HARLEY



THE ART OF LOVE DEATH+ROBOTS

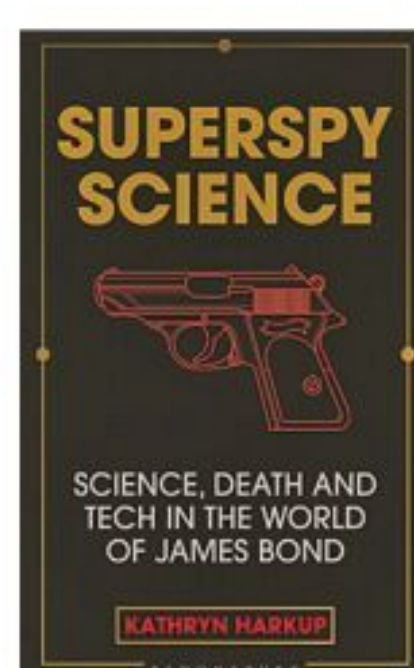
★★★★★
Animation expert Ramin Zahed digs deep into the Netflix adult anthology. Co-creator Tim Miller's desire to create a series "that pushed the boundaries of art" is reflected in the spellbinding images that accompany breakdowns of the show's 35 episodes.

JAMES MOTTRAM



Now was probably
a bad time to tell them
he needed the bathroom...

BOOKS



SUPERSPY SCIENCE: SCIENCE, DEATH AND TECH IN THE WORLD OF JAMES BOND

★★★★★ **KATHRYN HARKUP** BLOOMSBURY SIGMA

Just how practical is it to hide a lair in a volcano or in space? Can nanobots really be used for tracking or assassination purposes? And would you genuinely be sucked out of a plane were its cabin to suddenly depressurise? These and other questions around the science and technology featured in the James Bond movies are put under the most forensic of microscopes.

Having previously analysed the poisons used by Agatha Christie and the multiple ways Shakespeare did away with his characters, ex-chemist Harkup is the ideal boffin to probe the facts behind the Bond films' more fanciful diversions from reality. The *Goldfinger*

chapter, for example, has a potted history of the laser that should be required reading for every supervillain wannabe. The *Skyfall* pages, meanwhile, tell you everything you ever wanted to know about cyanide ("The secret agent's favourite poison") and whether a capsule of it really would leave Raoul Silva's face looking like Gollum's.

OK, so we could have done without some of the more banal footnotes ("Please don't eat ricin or feed it to anybody else"), while the invisible car from *Die Another Day* is a baffling omission. Overall, though, this is a great way to know the Bond series' artistic licences from its total thunder-balls. **NEIL SMITH**

BEYOND BAGPUSS

★★★★★

CHRIS PALLANT BFI



Before Aardman, there was Smallfilms, the British animation outfit run by Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin behind such beloved children's classics as *Clangers*, *Ivor the Engine* and that titular saggy old cloth cat. Those of a certain age (40-plus) will immediately feel nostalgic, although Pallant's scrupulously researched tome takes a very serious-minded approach (with talk of "the bricolage of *Bagpuss*"). But it's still heartening to see these beautiful homespun animations get their due. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE MAN WHO LEAPT THROUGH FILM

★★★★★

CHARLES SOLOMON ABRAMS



Clunky title aside, this is a sparkling study of anime auteur Mamoru Hosoda, tracking his career from early setbacks (being fired from *Howl's Moving Castle*) to recent beauty *Belle*. Each of his six major films scores its own chapter, bustling with storyboards, character designs and concept art/finished film comparisons. Chocka with interviews, it sheds light on Hosoda's process as well as his preoccupations: community spirit, family ties, whales.

MATTHEW LEYLAND

100 ANIMATED FEATURE FILMS

★★★★★

ANDREW OSMOND BFI



The latest in BFI's highly thumbable 100... series is revised from 2010, but with 35 newly substituted entries plus updates, it deserves a second look. The straightforward layout (alphabetised spreads with a single image for most films) conjures the vibe of an approachable encyclopedia. But with obscurities alongside the Disney/Ghibli fare, it works as a viewing-guide checklist to tackle, while Osmond's crisp prose makes the entries happily moreish. **MATT MAYTUM**

TOTAL BUTTE

CINEMA CELEBRATED AND DEBATED. BOOSTING YOUR MOVIE GEARS TO SUPERHERO LEVELS...



IS IT BOLLOCKS?

Film Buff investigates the facts behind outlandish movie plots.

THIS MONTH
ELVIS



Q In *Elvis*, the King fires his manager, Col Tom Parker, onstage during a Las Vegas Hilton show. Uh-huh or nuh-uh?

A Alanna Nash, author of *The Colonel: The Extraordinary Story Of Colonel Tom Parker And Elvis Presley*

“He never fired him onstage, but there was an incident in Vegas in 1974 where Elvis criticised [hotel owner] Barron Hilton from the stage for firing one of Elvis’s favourite employees.” Elvis had visited an employee at home after hearing his wife had terminal cancer and later discovered the employee had been fired over the incident as hotel rules dictated that staff and talent were not allowed to mingle.

During his show that evening, Presley verbally attacked Hilton, declaring that he “wasn’t worth a damn”. “That led to a colossal shouting match afterwards with Parker, and talk of firing and quitting on both their parts, with the Colonel ultimately presenting a bill the Presleys could not pay. And so things resumed as they had been. Elvis would never have been so crass as to have fired the Colonel from the stage.”

And no, Presley wasn’t aware of his manager’s immigration status as seen in his onscreen meltdown. “He fully believed the Colonel’s story that Parker hailed from Huntington, West Virginia; Elvis died not knowing the truth. That didn’t come out until 1981.” And that bill that Parker drew up? “The total varies from \$2 million to \$10 million,” says Nash.

VERDICT BOLLOCKS

ALTERNATIVE BOX OFFICE

The biggest movies...
STARRING SAIRSE RONAN



01	LITTLE WOMEN 2019	\$218.9M
02	THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL 2014	\$163.5M
03	ATONEMENT 2007	\$129.8M
04	THE LOVELY BONES 2009	\$94.9M
05	MUPPETS MOST WANTED 2014	\$79.3M
06	LADY BIRD 2017	\$78.9M
07	HANNA 2011	\$65.3M
08	THE HOST 2013	\$64.5M
09	BROOKLYN 2015	\$62.1M
10	MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS 2018	\$47M

ON LOCATION REEL SPOTS BEHIND THE CAMERA



WHAT? In *Roman Holiday*, Princess Ann (Audrey Hepburn) and undercover reporter Joe (Gregory Peck) visit a city landmark to place their hands in the stone gob of the Bocca della Verità. Charming shrieks ensue.

WHERE? Piazza della Bocca della Verità, Rome, Italy

GO: Possibly a storm drain cover, this Oceanus face is in the portico of the Santa Maria in Cosmedin church and attracts so many maw-prodders that there’s a roped-off queuing system.

BRIDGES IN MOVIES

Superb spans...



1

INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

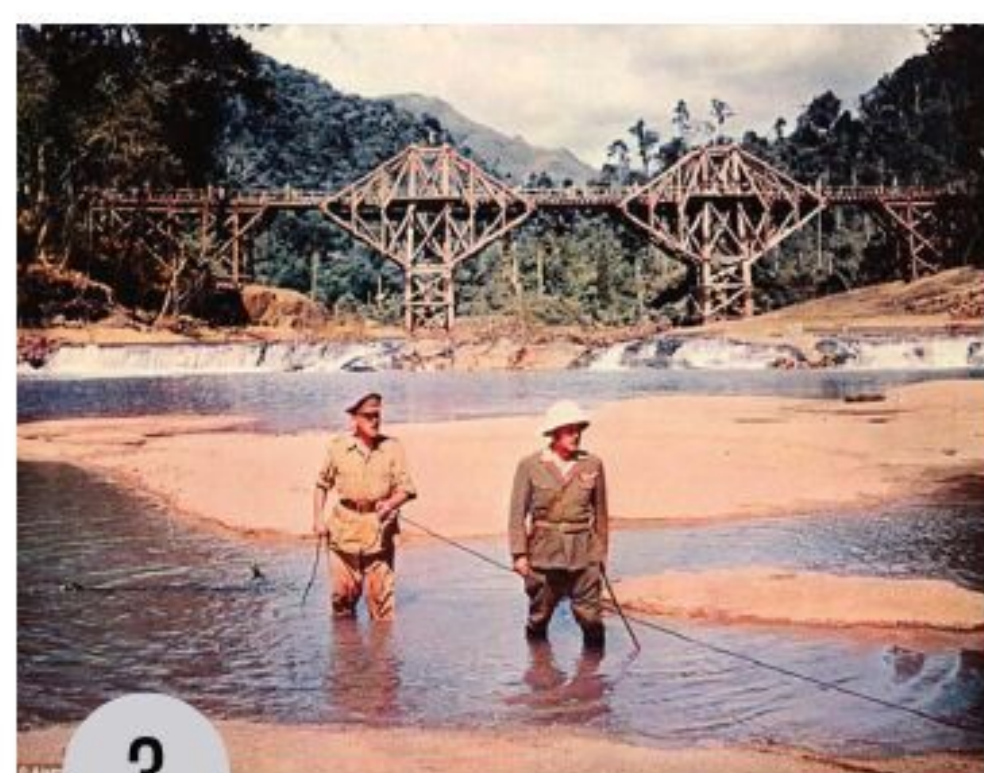
After freeing enslaved kids, saving sacred stones and escaping on a minecart, Indy finds himself trapped on a rope bridge suspended over crocodile-infested waters. With Kali Ma cultists closing in on all sides, the only way is down...



2

TRUE LIES

James Cameron's love letter to Bond and '80s actioners gets properly lyrical when superspy Harry (Arnold Schwarzenegger) chases down wife Helen (Jamie Lee Curtis) and nuke-wielding baddies across the Florida Keys' Seven Mile Bridge.



3

THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI

Allied POWs lose themselves in the madness of war when tasked with constructing the titular bridge by their Japanese captors. Alec Guinness shines in the starry cast of David Lean's Oscar-winning epic. "Beautiful, a first-rate job..."



4

SORCERER

William Friedkin's *Exorcist* follow-up was a remake of *The Wages Of Fear*, a tale of crims trucking gallons of nitroglycerine across unstable jungle tracks. The climax is a perilous river crossing over a frayed rope bridge – a moment shot for real (albeit with hidden hydraulics and steel cables).



5

RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

When evolved ape Caesar (Andy Serkis) escapes captivity with his simian pals, they climb, swing and ride horses over the Golden Gate. It's a stunning finale to part one of one of the 21st century's most underrated trilogies.



6

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

While the opening onslaught of Omaha Beach (rightly) gets much attention, the final 40 minutes of Steven Spielberg's devastating WW2 saga still hits home as Tom Hanks and company desperately defend a besieged bridge against relentless Nazi attacks.



7

THOR: RAGNAROK

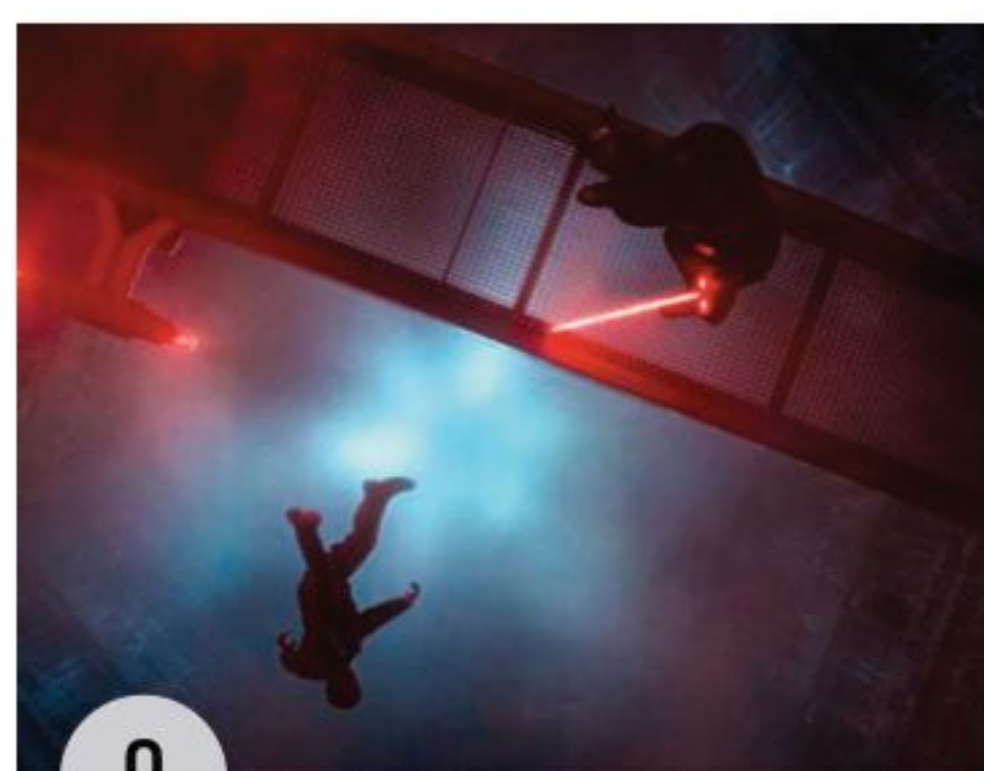
After losing an eye to evil sister Hela (Cate Blanchett), Thor faces down legions of goons on Asgard's rainbow bridge. Scored to Led Zeppelin's 'Immigrant Song' in techno-coloured slo-mo, Waititi's MCU debut married heart, spark and spectacle to joyous effect.



8

EVIL DEAD II

When Ash (Bruce Campbell) and chums check in to the world's worst weekend away, they're soon beset by Kandarian demons. Attempting to haul ass out of there, they discover the bridge home has been destroyed, girders twisted skyward like gnarled fingers...



9

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

J.J. Abrams' *Episode VII* delivers a gut punch when Han (Ford again) faces down wayward son Ben (Adam Driver) at Starkiller Base on a gantry over an abyss. Han's progeny isn't into bridging the gap between him and his pa. Audiences gasp.



10

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

Depressed everyman George (James Stewart) faces bankruptcy, jail and the end of all his dreams. He considers throwing himself to his death, but meets trainee angel Clarence on the crossing out of town. "Each man's life touches so many other lives..." **TIM COLEMAN**



HINDSIGHT CORNER

TOM HANKS

PHILADELPHIA

July 2004

“I recognised [the character of Andrew Beckett]. I saw myself there – a non-threatening, passionate, competitive guy.”

June 2022

“Let’s address ‘could a straight man do what I did in *Philadelphia* now?’ No, and rightly so. The whole point of *Philadelphia* was don’t be afraid. One of the reasons people weren’t afraid of that movie is that I was playing a gay man. We’re beyond that now, and I don’t think people would accept the inauthenticity of a straight guy playing a gay guy.”

PLAIN TALKING

**THIS MONTH
STEP AND REPEAT BOARD**

A branded wall for publicity photos of ‘talent’ at a press event. Step and repeat because of the repeated logos but also for the action of the stars: step in front, snap, and repeat.

FLOP CULTURE



THE ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES BY THE COWARD ROBERT FORD

Fifteen years ago, a fearless indie director and an A-list star collaborated on a radical western. Did the studio know what it was in for?

Why it was a good idea (on paper)

Brad Pitt wanted to make a film that mattered. Chopper helmer Andrew Dominik had just the thing: a Jesse James western, adapted from Ron Hansen’s 1983 novel. With American icon Pitt/James upfront, Warner Bros would surely make a cowboy killing.

What went wrong?

“I want to be surprised when I see a movie,” Dominik told *Total Film*. Warner Bros may have demurred. Presumably expecting fireworks from the Pitt/James double act, the studio were reportedly aghast when Dominik delivered a hushed, long-haul meditation on American myth. According to Dominik, even the never knowingly hurried Terrence Malick felt *Assassination* was overlong. Cast by Dominik for his sense of sadness, Pitt spends much of the film brooding or behaving callously, dismantling his image rather than burnishing it. As post-production “warfare” (Dominik’s word) delayed the release, Warner hired editors including Michael Kahn to trim the film to a popcorn-friendly length; the shorter versions suffered in test screenings. Pitt had no qualms about length issues: his contract

stipulated that the title was for keeps, even if it spilled the who-kills-who surprise.

Redeeming feature

Roger Deakins’ images, Dominik’s patient, determined direction, Nick Cave and Warren Ellis’ melancholy score, Pitt’s intense lead, Casey Affleck’s lost fanboy: tip to toe, the film’s a killer.

What happened next?

Between more mixed takes, rave reviews gave *Assassination* critical legs. While two Oscar nominations (lost to *There Will Be Blood*/*No Country For Old Men* – no shame there) followed, a tragically limited five-screen US release stiffed box-office hopes. Fifteen years of disc-driven adoration on, the film now holds – says Dominik – “sacred cow” status.

Should it be remade?

No, just resurrected, re-released – and extended. Dominik favours a cut that runs 15 minutes longer than the theatrical version, though he’s unsure it will ever emerge: “Maybe if I kick a goal with a movie that breaks through,” he says. Give him a ball.

KEVIN HARLEY

BUDGET

\$30m

BOX OFFICE

\$15m

AWARDS

23

TF STAR RATING

★★★

ROTTEN TOMATOES

76%

"Wait, which *Scream* entry are we in now? *Scream* or *Scream*?"



IS IT JUST ME OR DOES HOLLYWOOD NEED TO UP ITS NAME GAME?



RICH EDWARDS
@RICHEDWARDS

The blockbuster sequels of the '70s and '80s were all about the numbers. The likes of *The Godfather: Part II* and *Jaws 2*

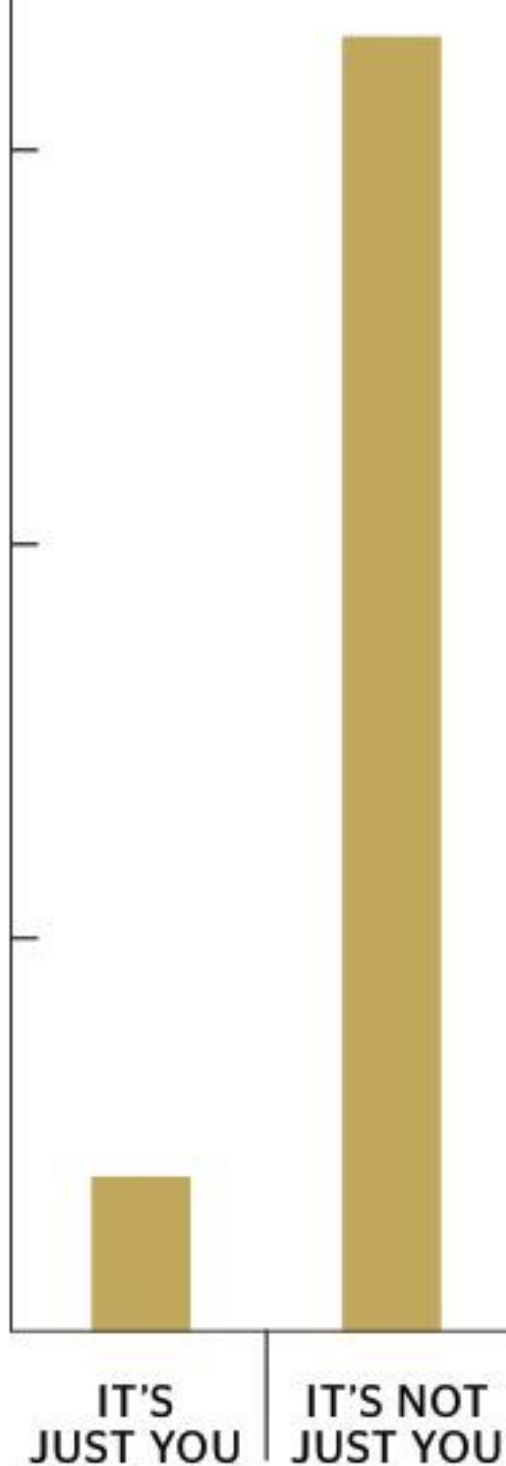
used basic arithmetic to differentiate themselves from their predecessors. Then, the rise of the colon initiated an era of lengthy sub-clauses, in which mouthfuls such as *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider – The Cradle Of Life* became commonplace.

Now, Hollywood has redefined the notion of going back to basics with its latest hot tactic for follow-ups: simply recycling the name of an earlier movie. While it's acceptable for a remake, repeating yourself

verbatim is not just embarrassingly unimaginative, it's confusing too: "Are you talking about *Scream*, as in Wes Craven's self-referential 1996 slasher? Or do you mean the fifth entry in the series, which reignited interest in the Ghostface saga earlier this year?"

Scream isn't the only recent offender. The 2018 *Halloween* sequel/reboot that pretends the earlier Michael Myers follow-ups never happened is simply called *Halloween*; 2011's kinda-prequel to *The Thing* is also *The Thing*; and – perhaps most confusingly of all – 2019's *Shaft* is the third one to bear *exactly* that same one-word title. With several cast overlaps – *all three* feature Richard Roundtree as the original John Shaft – there's no elegant way of differentiating the films in conversation. It's also a pain when you're doing a search on IMDb.

OFFICE-OMETER
THE TF STAFF
VERDICT IS IN!



And apologies to *The Predator* and *The Suicide Squad*, but adding a meagre definite article does *not* constitute a significant title change. At least when *Aliens* attached a lone 'S' to the title of Ridley Scott's classic space horror, it was a reminder that the xenomorphs had gone plural in a big way.

Thanks to the long-running horror franchises of the '80s, ever-increasing numerals still carry a certain stigma when attached to a title, but the later *Fast & Furious* movies wear their eights and nines as a badge of honour. And surely the English language is rich enough that clever subtitles or even the slightly lame wordplay of *Die Hard With A Vengeance* are preferable to lazily regurgitating the name of an earlier entry. Or is it just me?

Share your reaction at www.gamesradar.com/totalfilm or on Facebook and Twitter.



LAST TIME IS STREAMING NO SUBSTITUTE FOR CINEMA?

Mark J. Holohan

Agreed. But the price of going and noisy audiences puts me right off.

Brent Troutner

This is a no-brainer... nothing beats

watching a well-shot film on a cinema screen, especially with a properly focused and lamped projector.

Rob Hall

I watched *Top Gun: Maverick* at the

cinema; the camerawork was absolutely stunning. Cinema is still king.

Andre Thomas

Streaming just doesn't make sense financially.

Celebrating the standout stock characters in movies...

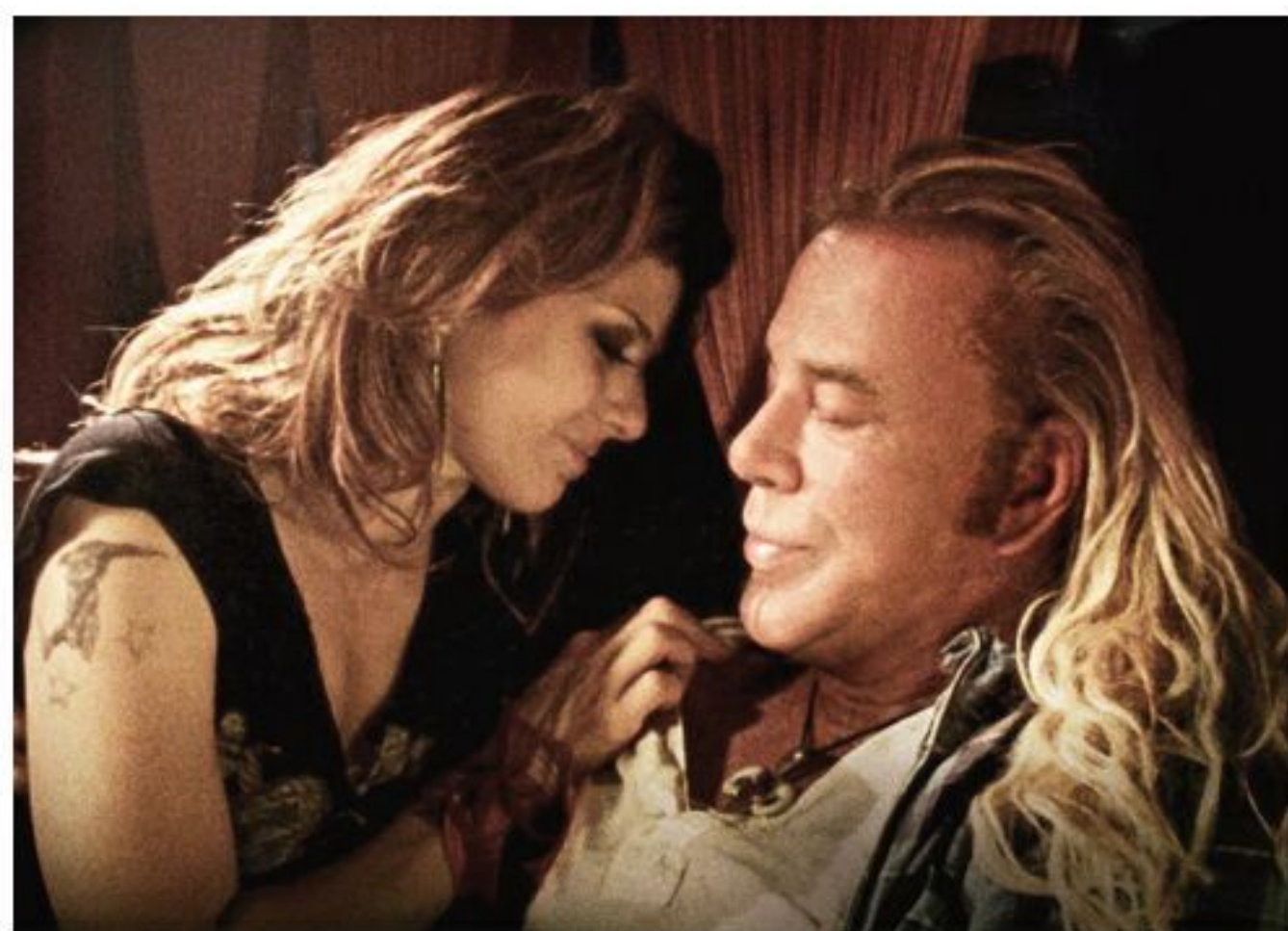
TAKING STOCK

THE 'TART WITH A HEART'

WORDS LEILA LATIF

A strange crossroads was met in the 1980s and '90s. Hollywood was moving away from the gritty auteur fare and complex antiheroes of *Taxi Driver*, *The Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now*, and more wholesome action adventures filled with quippy one-liners like *Back To The Future* and *Indiana Jones* reigned supreme. This shift took place alongside the third wave of feminism, which championed more rights for every type of woman and a general embracing of sex-positivity – that a woman's sexuality was something to be not just tolerated but celebrated. These two cultural waves crashed into one another, creating one of the defining

tropes of the era, 'The Tart With A Heart'. This was embodied by female sex workers who acted as the moral compass of the film, often while still being the object of desire, a damsel in distress and/or a punchline. Pains are taken in each film to distinguish our character from your 'normal' sex workers – they are more ethical, ambitious or intelligent than their colleagues. Where the most notable sex-worker characters of the 1970s were a trafficked child played by 12-year-old Jodie Foster (*Taxi Driver*) and Jane Fonda as a hard-as-nails call girl catching a serial killer (*Klute*), this era instead saw warm-hearted sex workers more likely to be accepting a marriage proposal than a plea-bargain.



CASSIDY

MARISA TOMEI, *THE WRESTLER* (2008)

A late entry to the staple came from Darren Aronofsky in 2008, but the film's female lead still has a '90s vibe. Marisa Tomei was hesitant to take the role of a stripper with a soul, saying, "The worst thing was not the nudity – it's that it's going to be freezing." Having powered through the cold, she gives an extraordinary performance, providing deep wells of sympathy for Mickey Rourke's damaged ring-man. Cassidy also has firmer boundaries than her cinematic predecessors, rejecting a relationship and more importantly, walking away rather than watching a man destroy himself.



LINDA ASH

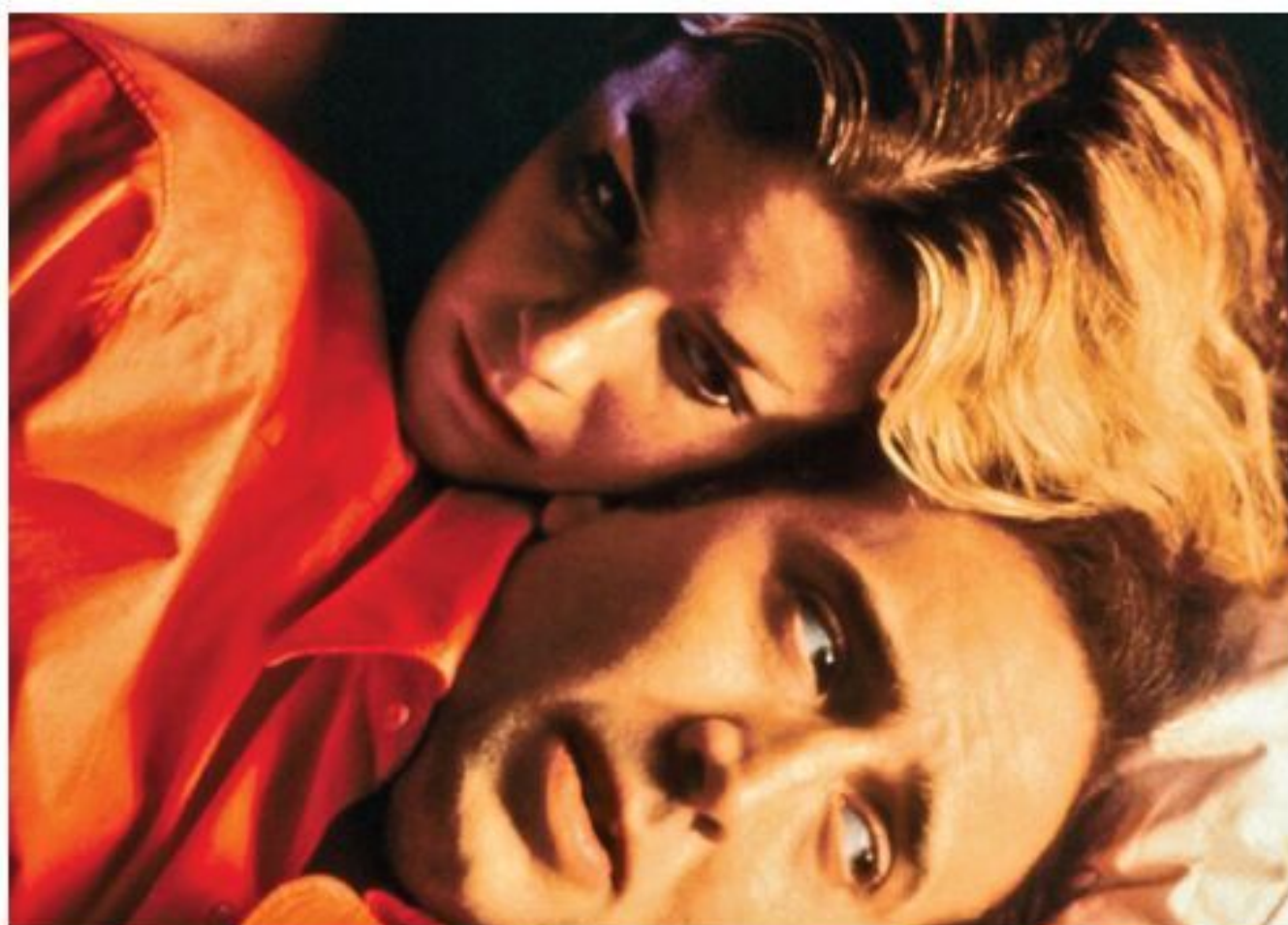
MIRA SORVINO, *MIGHTY APHRODITE* (1995)

Many of Woody Allen's romantic subplots have aged like milk, but Mira Sorvino fully earned her Oscar for her portrayal of a deeply problematic character. Allen plays Lenny, who tracks down his adopted son's birth mother to find sweet but dim-witted porn star Linda. The film infantilises her, and most of the punchlines come from her describing explicit sex acts with wide-eyed innocence, but Sorvino shines nonetheless. She has soured on the role since, saying the controversy surrounding Allen "ruins *Mighty Aphrodite* for me, ruins my Oscar performance, ruins that start of my career". ➡➡





TAKING STOCK



SERA

ELISABETH SHUE, LEAVING LAS VEGAS (1995)

Rightfully recognised for an awards-worthy performance, Elisabeth Shue brings tragic pathos to a hardened but vulnerable woman who encounters Ben Sanderson (Nicolas Cage), a Hollywood screenwriter on his way to Vegas to drink himself to death. The two bond through their shared trauma, and where saccharine storytelling could have taken over, *Leaving Las Vegas* instead leaves us with a more difficult truth, that loving someone sometimes means accepting that you cannot save them. Shue said of her most acclaimed role that it taught her the power of “unconditional love”, with Sera a poster girl for a cinematic fallen woman who emotionally and physically supports her John.



VIVIAN WARD

JULIA ROBERTS, PRETTY WOMAN (1990)

That one of the most beloved romcoms of all time takes place between a finance bro and a sex worker seems extraordinary. The original script, titled ‘\$3,000’, included drug addiction and an unhappy ending, but a few re-writes and Garry Marshall’s signature sweetness transformed this into one of cinema’s favourite happily-ever-afters, with Richard Gere brandishing red roses in a white limousine. But *Pretty Woman* wants to have its cake and eat it too, making clear that Julia Roberts’ streetwalker is an ingénue and doesn’t have a pimp or a drug habit, while poking fun at other sex workers. “A lot has changed in the industry... I don’t think you could make that movie now, right?” Roberts said in 2020. “So many things you could poke a hole in, but I don’t think it takes away from people being able to enjoy it.” The film positions Vivian as not being right for this age-old occupation – too smart, sensitive and pure of heart – and wealth restores her to her rightful place in the world.



LYNN BRACKEN

KIM BASINGER, L.A. CONFIDENTIAL (1997)

Curtis Hanson’s Los Angeles-set neo-noir sees another ‘loose woman’ (Veronica Lake lookalike Lynn, played by Kim Basinger) serve as the film’s moral centre. Basinger could relate to the way Lynn’s striking looks are commodified and labelled, saying at the time, “If you come to L.A. and just do movies that you are drawn to do and one of them ends up giving you a tag at the end of your name ‘sex symbol’, then it causes a lot of problems for you to be taken seriously.” But Lynn is not so much a person making virtuous choices as a perpetual victim, where the sins of the city rain down upon her.



OPHELIA

JAMIE LEE CURTIS, TRADING PLACES (1983)

One of the era’s most prototypical ‘tarts’ as well as one of its most incoherent characterisations. Jamie Lee Curtis’ Ophelia is paid \$100 to participate in Dan Aykroyd’s downfall, felling him on the steps of a police station in front of his fiancée while pretending he is her drug dealer. From that point on she constantly helps him with no salient reason to do so, given his open disdain for the work she does. Looking back on the role she credits director John Landis for the “huge opportunity” but the objectification of Ophelia sits less comfortably, particularly one scene where she, apropos of nothing, disrobes in front of Aykroyd. Recalling the moment with *People* this year, Curtis said, “Did I like doing it? No. Did I feel embarrassed that I was doing it? Yes. Did I look OK? Yeah. Did I know what I was doing? Yeah. Did I like it? No. Was I doing it because it was the job? Yes.”



ALABAMA

PATRICIA ARQUETTE, TRUE ROMANCE (1993)

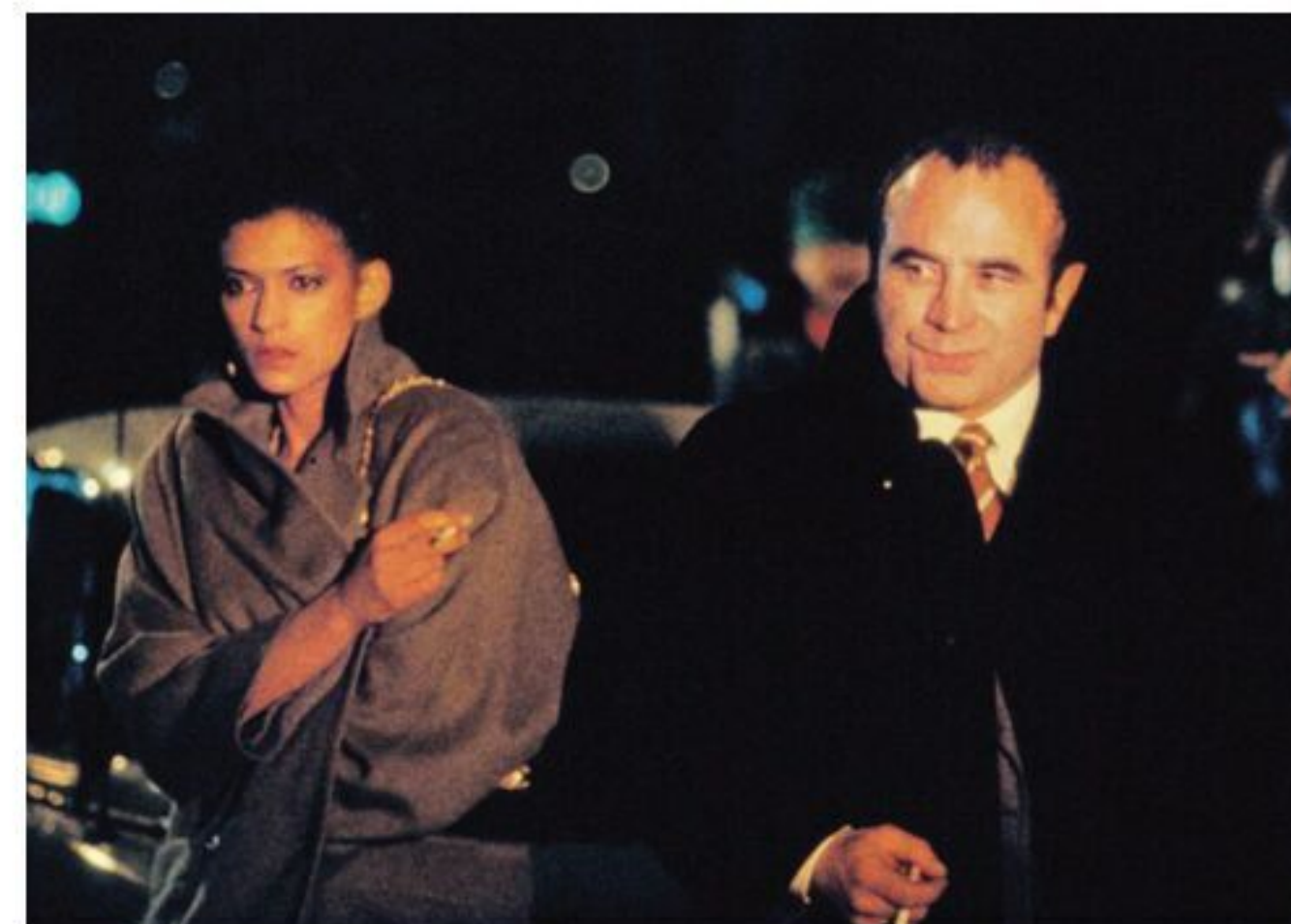
Patricia Arquette's radiant turn as a film-obsessed, pie-eating lady of the night owes a debt to *Something Wild*'s quirky agent of chaos, Lulu (see below). More male fantasy than tangible person, she was written by a young Quentin Tarantino as a grown woman fascinated by an awkward dude's takes on Elvis, comic books and kung fu. The character works perfectly in this heightened pulpy reality, but Arquette didn't buy the attraction. "I struggled with playing her," she recently told the *Independent*. "She was very supportive, even in the slightly shocking things. Her boyfriend kills someone and she's still like... yeah!"



LANA

REBECCA DE MORNAY, RISKY BUSINESS (1983)

Best recalled with a selective memory, focusing on Tom Cruise dancing in a shirt and its progressive sex positivity, but with total amnesia for its punchline of a Black trans sex worker. Lana (Rebecca De Mornay) represents the ultimate schoolboy fantasy when Cruise's high-schooler orders her for a deflowering while his parents are away, and ultimately becomes a weekend teen pimp. Of course the sex worker wants to continue seeing the schoolboy romantically... "Risky Business still stands up," said De Mornay later. "It's timeless. They study that film in film school." True – but in this enlightened time, hopefully they're examining the portrayal of privileged white dudes, patriarchal malaise and women as commodities.



SIMONE

CATHY TYSON, MONA LISA (1986)

Perhaps surprisingly, a TWAH character with a fair amount of agency is also a woman of colour. Simone (Cathy Tyson) has climbed to the 'high-class' end of her industry, and has fresh-out-of-prison George (Bob Hoskins) drive her to her litany of wealthy clients. She has adopted a pretentious artifice and a strong survival instinct but retained a kindness at her core, something George misinterprets as romance. Reflecting back on the role, Tyson described the characters as "quite incongruous" but still felt "immense pride" in the film. And an ahead-of-its-time queer subplot has helped it age better than many of its counterparts.



MONA STANGLEY

DOLLY PARTON, THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS (1982)

In many ways, this is the role that Dolly Parton was born to play, having grown up "dirt poor" in Tennessee idolising, and later emulating, the make-up and giant hair of the local prostitutes. Here she plays a matriarchal brothel owner where 'working girls' perform gleeful dance numbers and Parton sings 'I Will Always Love You' a decade before *Bodyguard*. Parton doesn't treasure the memory of making the film, in 2021 reflecting that, "I was happy with the success of it; it was just a hard one to do." But despite her talents, this hooker with a heart of gold follows all the trope's conventions, including fulfilling her greatest dream of being... a wife.



LULU

MELANIE GRIFFITH, SOMETHING WILD (1986)

A devil-may-care sex worker confronting a yuppie banker Charlie (Jeff Daniels) fits not only within the 'tart with a heart' trope, but also the 'manic pixie dream girl', where an eccentric female character "[teaches] broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures" (as Nathan Rabin put it in his *Elizabethtown* review that coined the phrase). Though free-spirited Lulu arrives onscreen in no need of a saviour, the film's machinations put her in harm's way, in the form of her dastardly ex-husband (the late, great Ray Liotta). Though the TWTH needs rescue, there's far less pearl-clutching moral outrage than many others of the era, with Charlie less interested in 'taming' his love interest.

THE BIG
SHOT

2001'S CENTRIFUGE SET

In a film comprising images and effects that startle and wow at every turn, the biggest jaw-dropper of all is the set that is variously referred to as the Ferris-wheel set or the rotating set or the centrifuge set. It is the crew's compartment within the spaceship *Discovery One*, bound for Jupiter, and it was constructed at the whopping cost of \$750,000 – about \$6.5m in today's money.

Kubrick insisted on absolute verisimilitude in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, from each button and bolt to every scientific doctrine, and *Discovery One* was constructed on the theory that artificial gravity could be created through centrifuge. As such, interior shots were filmed to give the illusion of the spaceship spinning, and British firm Vickers-Armstrong Engineering Group spent six months constructing a set that was 38 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 30 tons in weight. It could rotate at three miles per hour.

For the famous shot where Dr. Frank Poole (Gary Lockwood) jogs circuits of the wheel, he was in fact running on the spot, like a hamster taking exercise, as the set revolved around him. Naturally the items in the room were affixed to the wheel to hold them in place as it turned, much as a similar technique had been used in the 1951 musical *Royal Wedding* to allow Fred Astaire to dance up the walls and across the ceiling. Rotating sets would later afford memorable scenes in three classic horror movies of the 1980s – *Poltergeist*, *A Nightmare On Elm Street* and *The Fly* – and allowed for the head-spinning corridor scrap in Christopher Nolan's 2010 action-thriller *Inception*.

But *2001* is the daddy, its various set-ups eliciting numerous gasps. For scenes containing characters on opposite sides of the wheel, one actor was always seated so they could be buckled in place and literally hang upside down. Meanwhile, two camera set-ups could be used depending on the effect required, with the camera either rooted in one place as the set glided past, or bolted to the moving set so it turned circuits; a 360-degree tilting platform allowed for the camera operator to remain upright as he span.

Filming of the centrifuge scenes took place in March 1966 at the MGM-British Studios in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire. Kubrick, a legendary perfectionist, was, for once, pleased with the results. "It's nice to get two minutes of usable footage after two days of filming," he beamed. **JAMIE GRAHAM**





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GIVING CREDIT

Saluting the behind-the-scenes talent making movie magic.

CRAIG LATHROP PRODUCTION DESIGNER | ART DIRECTOR

Craig Lathrop is one of Robert Eggers' long-time collaborators – creating the physical worlds of *The Witch*, *The Lighthouse* and *The Northman*. His work can also be seen in *The Devil All the Time* and *The Empty Man*. He tells *Buff* about the art of being invisible in his creativity.

How would you describe your role in simple terms?

I'm responsible for designing the physical world of a film, ensuring all of the visual elements work in concert to achieve the director's vision and reflect the characters on screen. To do that, I am tasked with leading a large creative team to produce all of the sets, set dressing, props, graphics, greens (or landscaping), etc.

How did you get started?

I grew up in LA and studied theatre at CSUN after I left high school. I was able to get part-time work at a local scene shop during the school year and worked full-time as a carpenter on films during the summers. It wasn't long until I started working as a set designer and worked my way up through art departments in LA, San Francisco, New York and Canada.

What's the biggest misconception about production designers?

I don't think a lot of people know what production designers actually do! I hope when you see a film I've designed, you're transported into the world of the film. When the camera pushes into a character's bedroom, I hope you're not

thinking about how the items on the bedside table reflect certain aspects of the character, or how the colour palette of the room ties into a larger thematic arc of the film or the emotional beat of the scene. I hope that you simply see the character's bedroom and are excited to see what might happen there. When we do our jobs well, much of what we do should be invisible.

What's the best thing about your job?

In the early days of pre-production, I may have an idea and scribble something down on a piece of paper, and then in just a few weeks or months, I get to walk onto the stage and there is the fully realised set, painted and dressed and waiting for the actors and other crew members to arrive. For me, there is not much better than that.

What's the worst thing about the job?

There never seems to be enough money to do everything that had originally been envisioned. So a fairly large part of my job is to creatively and diplomatically help bring the vision and the budget together.

What's the most memorable film you've worked on? And which was the most challenging?

The Witch – we were a small group of like-minded people who were more determined than usual not to compromise even as we found a way to work within a small budget. The most challenging film is probably *The Northman*. The art department built everything on locations spread out over much of Northern Ireland. We had ships we designed in Belfast built in the Czech Republic, tapestries, carved idols and furniture being made in India, saddles and carts in England, and an army of carpenters, plasterers, painters, blacksmiths, propmakers, furniture makers, greens persons and other craftspeople building sets, forging swords, weaving blankets, etc. It was a lot of work, and terribly fun.



The Northman is one of the bold worlds that Craig Lathrop has had a big hand in creating.

'We were a small group of like-minded people who were more determined than usual'

What do you need to be a production designer for films?

If you're just starting out, I'd suggest two things. 1. Draw whenever you can. 2. Watch movies and start thinking about how your favourite filmmakers use world building to help tell a story. There are no certificates, diplomas, or official qualifications to be a production designer, but you will need to be able to work collaboratively, manage a budget, you'll need time management and leadership skills, because you will be leading a team of creative people and there will never seem to be enough time in the day. To design most of these worlds, you should have strong general knowledge of architecture and the history of architecture, of interior design, furniture styles, graphic design, art and art history, storytelling, film and film history, popular culture, construction techniques and the trades, set construction techniques, paint finishes, etc. You will need to become the jack of all trades, but the master of only film design. **JANE CROWTHER**

THE NORTHMAN IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD AND KEEP, AND ON 4K ULTRA HD, BLU-RAY AND DVD NOW.



Lathrop started out in a local scene shop and has worked his way up to the top.



INTERMISSION

A WRITER TAKES PAUSE TO CONSIDER...

Rediscovering a love of Lego.



ANTON VAN BEEK

I blame it all on *Ghostbusters*. It was 2015 and the TV channels were already filled with debate about the following year's Brexit referendum. It was also my birthday, and among the presents I received was a copy of the Lego Ideas *Ghostbusters* ECTO-1 set. Who could possibly have guessed where that one gift would eventually lead?

Honestly, I've no idea what compelled anyone to buy me Lego for my birthday back then. It's not that I'm averse to picking up the occasional film-related toy, but even so it had been three decades since I'd last messed around with those little plastic bricks. Sure, a combination of curiosity and childhood memories meant that I'd been known to wander into the odd Lego Store over the years. But that was really just to gaze in awe at the mammoth brick-built *Death Star*; I never actually bought anything. I can only assume that, given the subject matter, they thought it would be a fun gift for a film lover such as myself.

If so, they were right. Between the actual experience of building the surprisingly detailed model (they were clearly a lot more complex – and a lot more interesting – than when I was a kid) and the cute little minifigures of Ray, Peter, Egon and Winston that came with it, I was hooked. As is the way of these things, my newfound appreciation of Lego coincided with the build-up to the cinema release of *The Force Awakens* and, being one of the generation that grew up with George Lucas' sci-fi saga, it wasn't long before ECTO-1 was joined by brick-based X-Wings, TIE Fighters and other iconic craft from the *Star Wars* franchise. And if there weren't any new *Star Wars* sets that captured my attention? Well, Lego also has the licence for the Marvel Cinematic Universe... You can probably guess where this is going.

Smash cut to today and I'm typing this sitting in a home office where every single flat surface plays host to Lego sets big and small. Entire bookcases have been given over to brick builds based on film and TV franchises including *Star Wars*, the MCU, *Doctor Who*, *Tron*, *Seinfeld*, *Yellow Submarine*, *WALL•E*, *Batman* and *Jurassic Park*. Even my prized collection of limited edition Blu-

'But as I learnt that night back in 2015, building Lego sets is also incredibly relaxing'

ray boxsets must now share shelf space with displays of *The Wizard Of Oz*, Looney Tunes and Muppets collectible minifigures (I won't bore you detailing just how much time I've spent standing in the toy aisles of supermarkets feeling up these blind-bagged figures to find the ones I need).

As to why I fell so far and so fast down this particular rabbit hole? Well, I freely

admit that I've always had something of a collector mentality. But as I learnt that night back in 2015, building Lego sets is also incredibly relaxing. Not only is there something satisfyingly tactile to the whole construction process, but the bigger display sets also stimulate the old brain cells as well as providing a welcome escape from the stresses and anxieties of the past few years. Lego as a form of mindfulness – who would have thought it?

Not that I'm alone in feeling this way. Those same seven years that I have spent reigniting this love affair with the plastic bricks happened to coincide with a larger push inside The Lego Group itself to look beyond its traditional market. While this has had the advantage of pushing the toymaker to concoct increasingly complex and ever larger sets designed specifically to appeal to an older audience (right down to slapping 18+ age guidelines on the boxes, despite a complete lack of blocky rude bits), it's also seen prices skyrocket. Fancy giving a home to an accurately detailed, minifigure-scale Lego Millennium Falcon? Well, you can have one. Just be prepared to fork out the best part of £700 for the privilege...

But what really makes Lego so much fun as a film fan is that you aren't limited to whatever licences the brand holds. Just because you can't buy an official set for *Mad Max's Pursuit Special* or *Little Shop Of Horrors' Audrey II* doesn't mean you can't have them. You just have to make your own; there's literally nothing stopping you beyond your own imagination and the bricks you have to hand. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to get back to the Temple of Gozer I've been dreaming up to go with those little Lego *Ghostbusters* that kicked this whole thing off...



ANTON VAN BEEK

JOHN WATERS

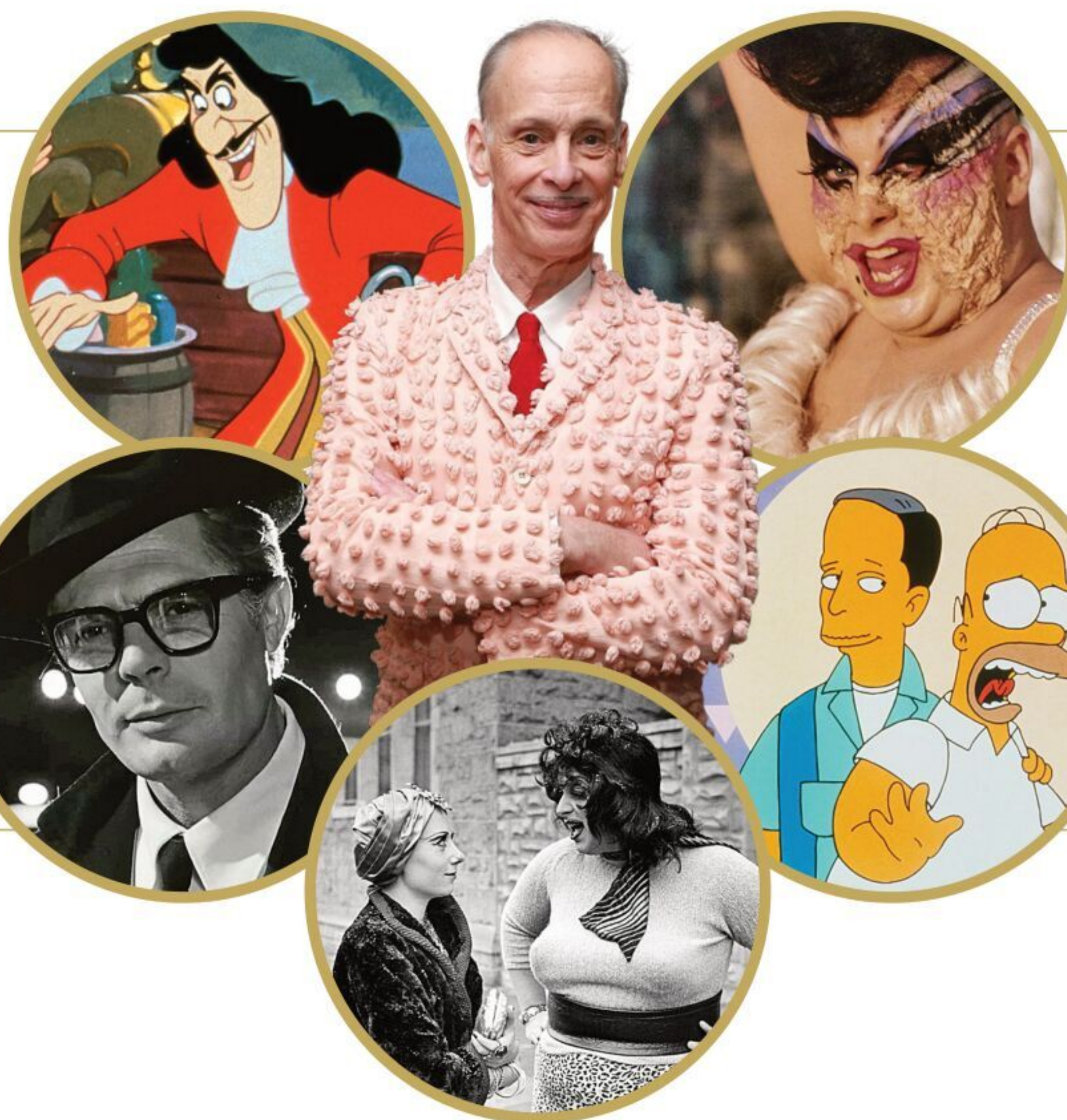
The baron of bad taste...

CHILD'S SLAY

Even as a young child, John Waters' tastes were a touch on the wicked side. "He became entranced with the Witch in *Snow White* and Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*," claims his mother, Patricia, who also took her son for day trips to junkyards to feed his fascination with car crashes. Waters' first taste of show business came with the (frequently gruesome) puppet shows he put on for neighbourhood children.

SCHOOL'S OUT

Determined to pursue a career in filmmaking, Waters attended NYU. He didn't stay long. "They kept talking about *Battleship Potemkin*," he says. "I had just gone to see [S&M flick] *Olga's House Of Shame* – that's what I was more into." Instead, Waters received his education at the cinema, watching four films a day – everything from 8½ to *Blood Feast*. However, it was the underground films of Warhol, Kenneth Anger and the Kuchar brothers that had the biggest influence on him.



DIVINE INSPIRATION

Waters established an eclectic company of actors he would work with again and again, such as Mink Stole, David Lochary and Mary Vivian Pearce. But chief among them was drag queen Glenn 'Divine' Milstead. "He was my Elizabeth Taylor," claims Waters, "[He] started his career playing a homicidal maniac and ended it playing a loving mother. Which is a pretty good stretch, especially when you're a 300-pound man."

SHAME AND FAME

While he hasn't directed a film since 2004's *A Dirty Shame*, Waters has himself become a pop-culture icon. As well as memorable appearances in *The Simpsons* (1997's 'Homer's Phobia'), *Seed Of Chucky* (2004) and *Jackass Number Two* (2006), this titan of transgressive cinema has now become so accepted by the mainstream that he even voiced a character in two episodes of Disney's *Mickey Mouse* (2013–19) cartoon.

ANTON VAN BEEK

TRASH IN THE CAN

In 1969, the Baltimore native embarked on his first feature, *Mondo Trasho*.

Costing just \$2,100 to make, the Warhol-influenced trash epic was shown locally, but Waters' use of music from his own record collection, without the costly clearances, means it has rarely been seen since. Waters continued pushing the boundaries of taste with twisted comedies *Multiple Maniacs* (1970) and *Pink Flamingos* (1972), the latter becoming a midnight-movie sensation.

KEY MOVIES



PINK FLAMINGOS 1972

★★★★★

Divine's literal shit-eating grin at the end of Waters' taboo-smashing masterwork cemented the director's position as cinema's 'Pope of Puke'.



FEMALE TROUBLE 1974

★★★★★

This wonderfully wicked media spoof is Waters at his very best. Just remember: "Nice girls don't wear cha-cha heels..."



HAIRSPRAY 1988

★★★★★

John Waters finally crossed over into the mainstream with this loving – but no less subversive – homage to '60s teen movies.



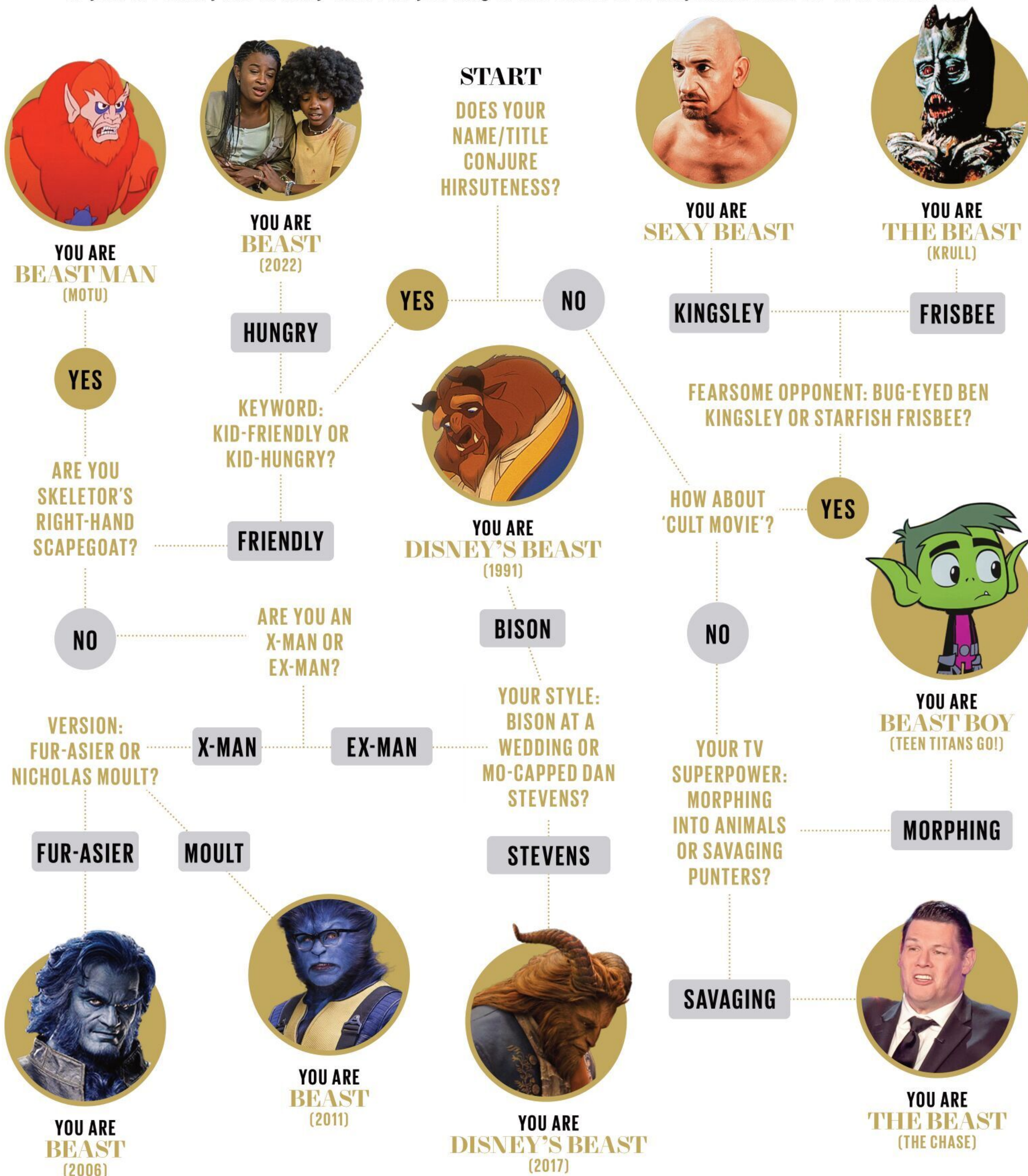
SERIAL MOM 1994

★★★★★

More than just a polished retread of *Female Trouble*, this hilarious celebrity satire boasts a killer lead turn from Kathleen Turner.

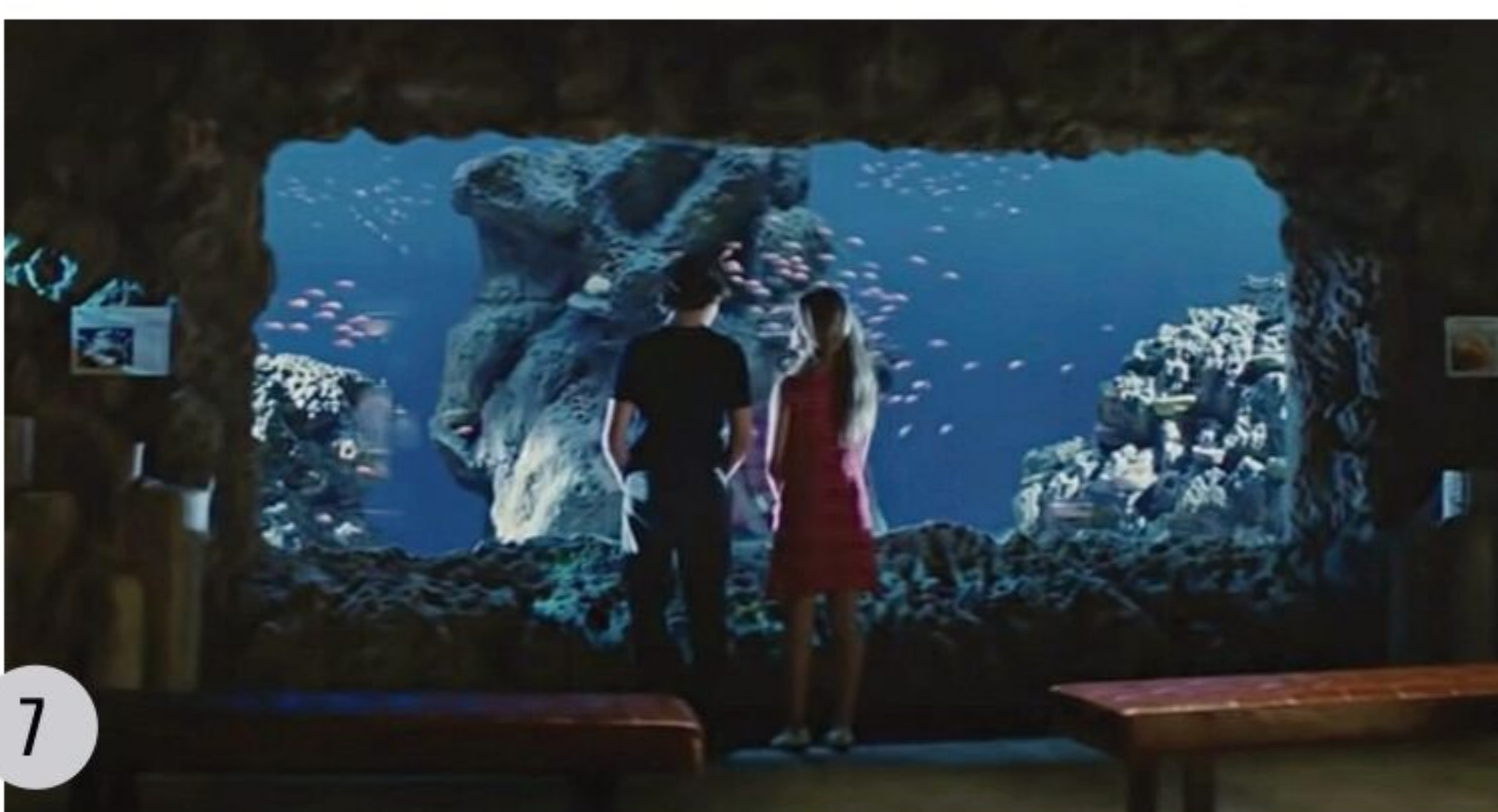
WHICH BEAST ARE YOU?

Is your life a fairytale or hairy tale? Are you king of the castle or a Greyskull botherer? Find out below!



NAME THE FRAME

Can you guess these eight fish tank scenes?



ANSWERS: 1. TO ALL THE BOYS; P.S. I STILL LOVE YOU 2. THE GRADUATE 3. DR. NO 4. DEUCE BIGALOW; MALE GIGOLO 5. MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 6. FINDING NEMO 7. X-MEN: FIRST CLASS 8. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO + JULIET

Dialogue

Mail, rants, theories etc.



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★ STAR LETTER

Remember when you'd go to the cinema and there'd be an annoying couple talking? You could tell them to shut up or throw popcorn at them. Then it was the mobile-phone user; you could tell them to shut up or throw popcorn. The other week I saw *Thor: Love And Thunder* and *The Black Phone* and the annoying thing at both showings was smart watches lighting up like torches every time their wearers moved around. At £13 a ticket I can't afford popcorn to throw any more. The onscreen bloke who says "turn off your phone" needs a 2022 edit.

DEV ORTON, LEEDS



Makes you wonder what the annoyances of the future will be: your own clone telling you you're in its seat? Horny punters in VR gear 'remaking' *The Lawnmower Man* during the talky bits? Oh, and do think twice before lobbing popcorn, folks; someone's got to clean it up, plus those hard little ball-bearing bits can probably kill if thrown with enough cinephile rage. Dev and everyone with a letter printed here will receive a copy of *Hot Seat*, available on digital 5 August and DVD 15 August via Signature Entertainment. Didn't send an address? Email it!

BREAKING BOND

I was shocked by the ending of *Layer Cake*. James Bond (i.e. Daniel Craig) walks out of a country club with his girlfriend when he is shot by Q (i.e. Ben Whishaw). What an act of treachery.

CARL HOWARD, LOWESTOFT

Excellent spot. Odd that neither of them mentions it when they next meet, in *Skyfall*. To be fair, that was eight years after Matthew Vaughn's film, and Q does apologise to 007 there



"And I stand ready to smite anyone who has an annoying light-up smartwatch."



@axlreznor

"One of the worst things about the MCU is people's fixation on what's happening in years to come... we haven't even finished Phase 4 yet."

and then, so maybe they've let by-guns be by-guns. Or maybe *Paddington 3* will see a cameoing Craig repay smooshed Cake with spilt marmalade...

SAFETY CHECK

I liked that *Jurassic World Dominion* felt fresh in its approach to begin with. It certainly wasn't more of the same. Until it was. Trouble is, you knew the established characters were safe. So any sense of danger, therefore, was removed. This is a running theme in movies at present. Bring back the uncertainty! The danger! What cinema needs right now is a Janet Leigh moment. Samuel L. Jackson in *Deep Blue Sea*. Steven Seagal in *Executive Decision*. Big name, early exit.

RUSS TRIBE, SOUTHAMPTON

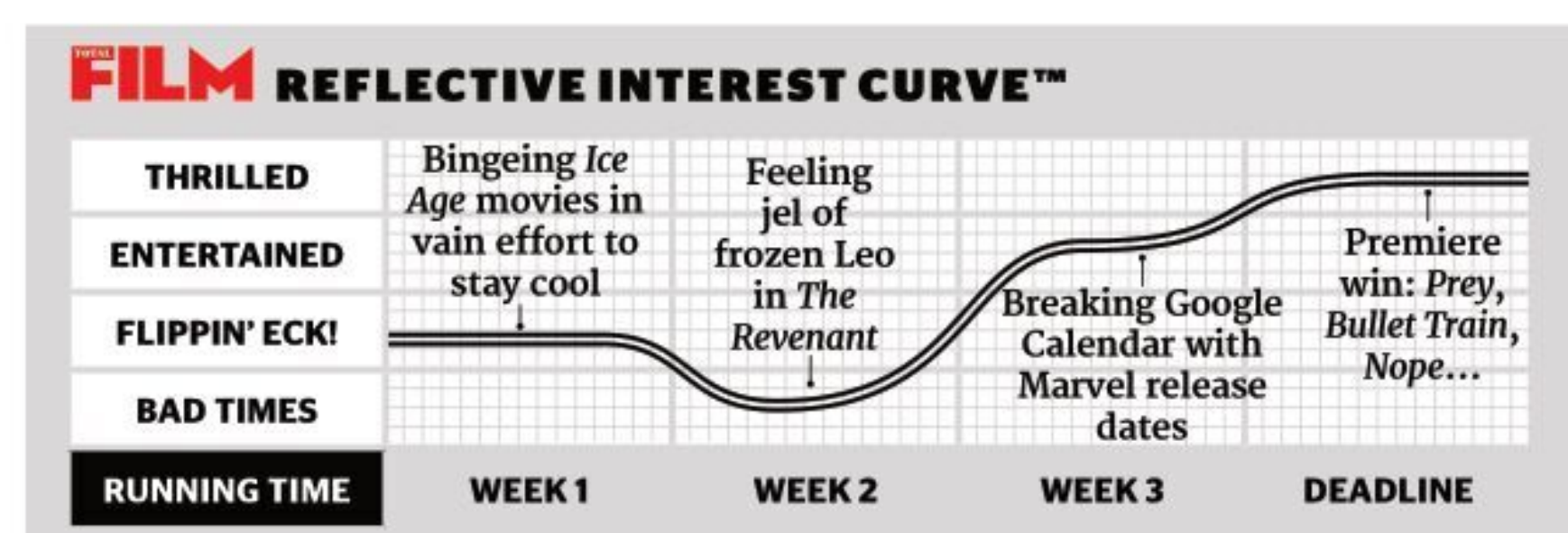
If those oldies were released today, viewers might be forgiven for expecting Janet to leap out of the car at the end of Hitchcock's movie, fit and well, or for at least one half of Samuel to pop up mid-credits. Followed, of course, by a tease for crossover sequel, *Deep Blue Seagal*, where Steven returns as a genetically modified, fin-armed Aikido-shark.

TAKE YOUR HAND A-WAAAY

Think I'm going to start a campaign to bring back social distancing in cinemas – not due to Covid, but to prevent inappropriate touching. I got so involved in *Top Gun: Maverick*'s nerve-shredding finale that I reached to grab the hand of my wife... who was sitting on my other side; I instead took the

WHAT YOU MISSED ON THE POD LAST MONTH

The Russo bros on *The Gray Man*, Bond and Cap; Brian And Charles' creators talk cabbages and sequels; a *Thor: Love And Thunder* spoiler-cast; and the merits of *Cocktail*. Plus reviews and more... every week!



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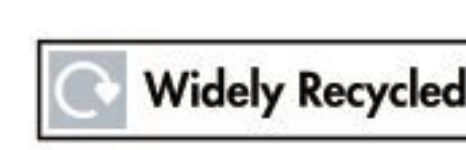
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OFFICE SPACED

CHATTER 'GEMS' OVERHEARD IN THE TOTAL FILM OFFICE THIS MONTH...

"I could feed you a vegan feta that would blow your mind."* **"Thought I'd do a meeting from a pool,** but risk to laptop was too great."* "I can't imagine a world where I wouldn't **eat a crumpet.**"



@wordngames1

[on the Captain America: New World Order announcement]

"Cool. But please make changes to his costume. It's horrible."

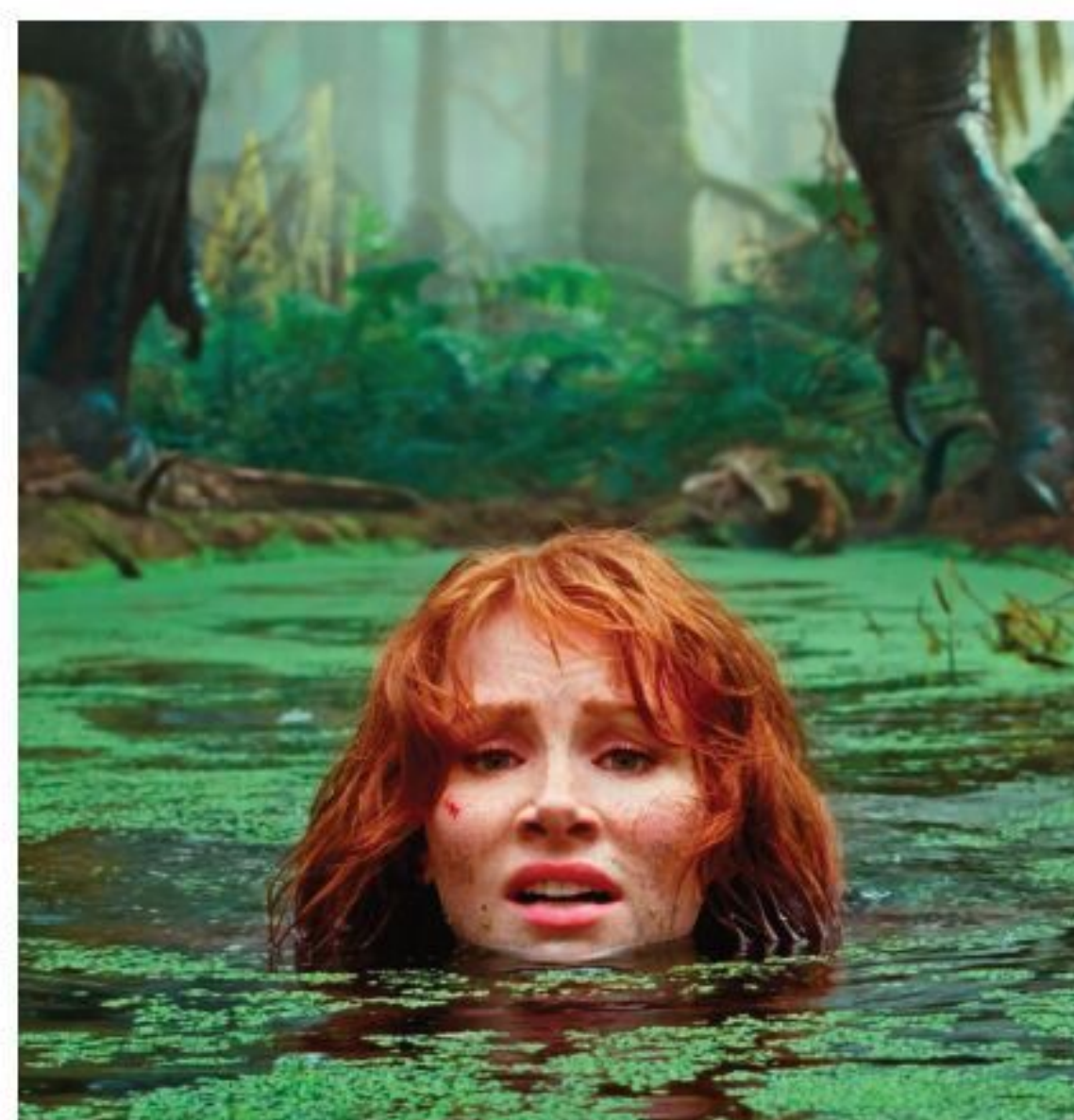
hand of a rather perplexed gentleman to my left. Interestingly enough, his hand was also sweaty, and we shared an "It's going to be all right" look, but I think we'd both rather forget the whole incident. This wouldn't have happened with social distancing.

DOMINIC HOLDER, NOTTINGHAM

Yikes. Sounds like you and your unwitting co-pilot took 'totes awks' to Mach 10. At least. Readers, do be mindful of where you place your hands in the cinema (and in life, generally), and be sure to maintain spatial - not to mention spousal - awareness.

KIND REWIND

Aged 12, I was desperate to see *The Thing*. I begged Dad to record it for me when it was on late-night ITV. The next morning, I discovered that he'd stayed up to video it for me, but when things got a bit blood-and-guts, he'd pressed stop, rewind it and pressed record again after the gory bits, leaving me with 20 minutes of talking! Over the years we were able to share our love of films, and I can now watch *The Thing* with a fond childhood memory of him as a caring dad.



He passed away on 30 June this year.

MARTIN JACKSON, VIA EMAIL

Sorry for your loss Martin, and thanks for sharing such a great memory. We'd be intrigued to see that extreme edit of Carpenter's classic; we'd bet it still conjures more frights and atmos than the 2011 remake/prequel (mind you, the same could be said of claymation subversion *Pingu's The Thing*, aka *Thingu*).

CHUCKLES ASSEMBLE

I was looking forward to new *Thor* movie *Love And Thunder*, mainly because the previous *Thor* movies were funnier than most other superhero movies. Despite *Deadpool*, most previous attempts at purely comedic superhero movies - like *My Super Ex-Girlfriend*, *Mystery Men*, *Defendor* - have been underperformers. Are there any purely funny superhero movies in the pipeline - maybe a spoof? - because I'm sure they'd clean up at the box office.

STEPHEN MCCARTHY, GLASGOW

Shazam! Fury Of The Gods looks like it'll play at the lighter end of the super-spectrum. And there's sure to be a LOL or 10 in *Ant-Man And The Wasp: Quantumania* and *Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 3*. If it's out-and-out comedy you want, revisit 2008's *Superhero Movie*... after which the darkest bits of the *Dark Knight* movies will seem like *Lego Batman*.

YOU CAN ALSO WRITE TO Total Film, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London, W2 6JR (postal addresses will be used for the sole purpose of sending out prizes)



60 SECOND SCREENPLAY

TF SAVES YOU THE COST OF A MOVIE EVERY MONTH. THIS ISSUE: **JURASSIC WORLD DOMINION...**



FADE IN:

EXT. RANCH, NEVADA

Dinosaurs live among people now and somehow everyone just gets on with it. CHRIS PRATT and BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD are looking after ISABELLA CLONEGIRL.

CHRIS PRATT

What have we warned you about going outside? It's too dangerous! To have a normal life, you have to spend every day inside our tiny cabin and never meet or speak to anyone else.

ISABELLA CLONEGIRL

Ugh! I didn't ask to be cloned! You're not my real Petri dish. You act like it's the end of the world out there!

A swarm of giant locusts attacks Utah, which gives LAURA DERN reason to visit old co-star SAM NEILL.

LAURA DERN

We need to investigate evil weirdo Campbell Scott and his genetics company Biosyn. By the way, I've split up from my husband.

SAM NEILL

Sounds great, let's go.

INT. BIOSYN FACILITY

They meet with JEFF GOLDBLUM who is giving a lecture to students about how they are all definitely going to die in an impending apocalypse. They applaud.

JEFF GOLDBLUM

Ah-ah-so good to see you again, dear old co-stars. This is the ah-ah-reunion everyone has waited decades for. Now let's split up and ah-ah-investigate.

EXT. BLACK MARKET, MALTA

After poachers kidnap ISABELLA CLONEGIRL, CHRIS PRATT and BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD go to the CIA and are somehow allowed to take part in an undercover operation.

BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD

Just blending in, just blending in... acting totally normal... Hey everyone I meet, have you seen the little girl in this photo?

Suddenly laser-trained velociraptors attack and there's a big rooftop chase with motorbike stunts. Imagine a Bond movie set-piece with digitally inserted dinosaurs.

DEWANDA WISE

Quick! Get in this plane to escape. I don't know either of you, but please let me risk my life to save that girl.

EXT. BIOSYN FACILITY

They all fly to the facility where they are suddenly attacked by flying dinosaurs.

CHRIS PRATT

We won't all make it. Bryce, you have to go on without me. Let's eject your seat so that you are safe from all the flying dinosaurs.

They do and she is immediately attacked by all the flying dinosaurs. The plane lands anyway. Everyone everywhere successfully survives a series of violent dinosaur attacks.

CAMPBELL SCOTT

What's going on? Why is there a new dino threat every four minutes in this film? Is this to hide the fact that I don't really seem to have a clear motive or plan?

B.D. WONG

Wait, I thought we were trying to cure diseases. Genetic experiments have never gone wrong for me so far.

EXT. WOODS

Everyone is still being attacked by dinosaurs – including the dinosaurs themselves. Finally, ISABELLA CLONEGIRL is rescued and all the lead stars at last bump into each other.

BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD

So nice to meet you! This is the exciting franchise meet-up everyone has been waiting years for. Now let's split up and investigate.

They all embark on a series of references to the original film until the inevitable giant dinosaur showdown. The T-rex wins again, obviously.

SAM NEILL

Phew! Well done, everyone. I'm so glad we managed to stop the evil Campbell Scott and the nefarious Biosyn from... wait, were they trying to cure diseases?

EXT. BIOSYN FACILITY

Everyone returns home. B.D. WONG somehow uses some new science to save the world from ecological disaster. The dinosaurs are moved to a new sanctuary.

JEFF GOLDBLUM

So the dinosaurs are safe now because they'll be kept in an enclosure? Sure. That'll work...

FIN

NEXT ISSUE: THE GRAY MAN

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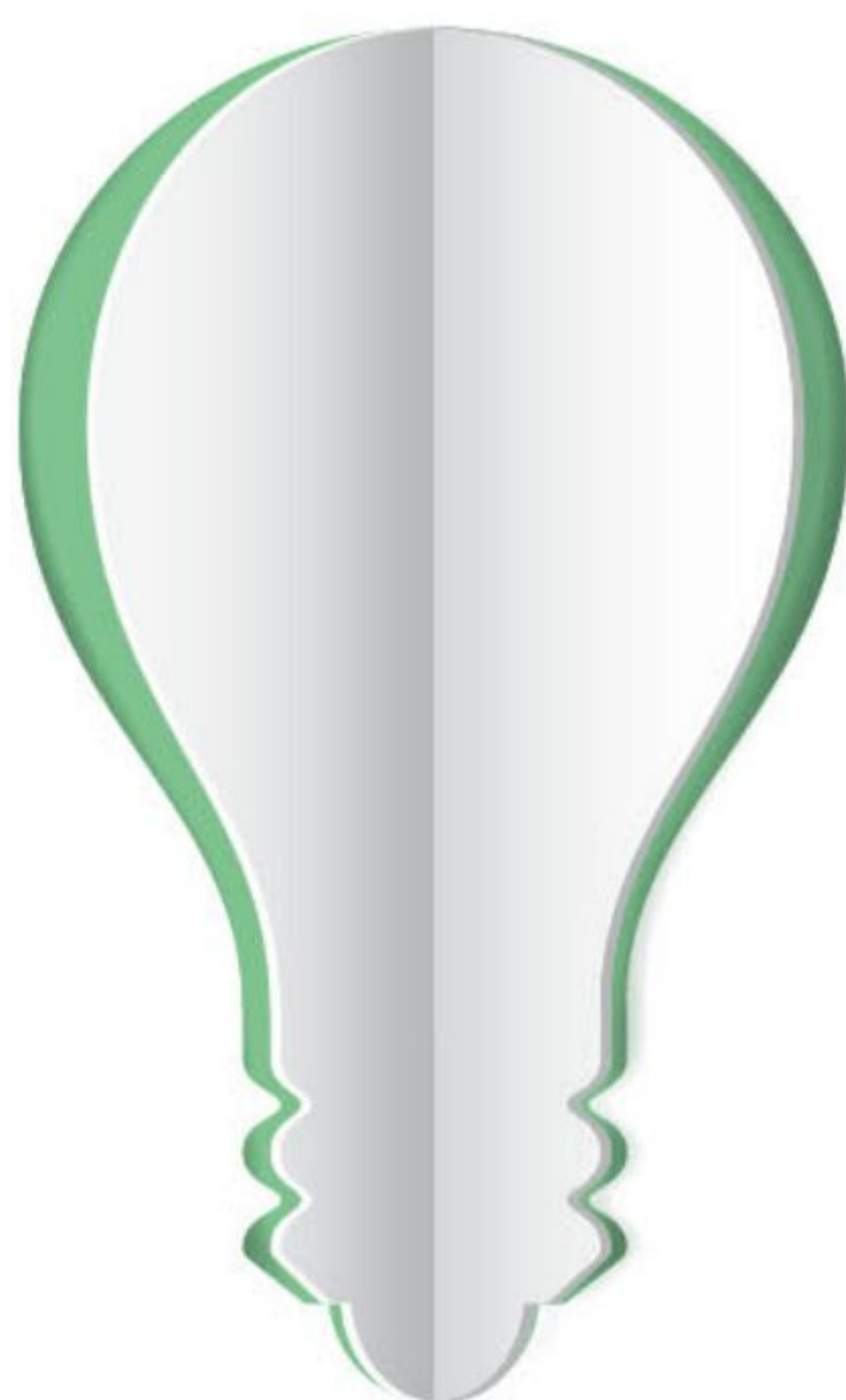


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